

TITLE PAGE

Mandala of the Mind; an Exploration of the Buddhist Philosophy on the Interdependent Nature of Existence.

by

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ABSTRACT

In this research I explore the interdependent nature of existence by means of both personal and objective criteria. My intention is to discover experientially the interrelated essence that pervades all phenomena.

Throughout human history a diverse range of people, including scientists, philosophers, writers, artists and mystics have employed a variety of methods to consider consciousness in relationship to what is termed 'reality'. Evaluating such contributions is essential to the broader inquiry. Core research areas including phenomenology, contemporary physics, Jungian psychology and environmental ethics are considered in relation to Buddhist beliefs and practices. Included in this study is an analysis of the Buddhist teachings on the 'Two Truths', 'Interbeing' and 'Emptiness'. Through these examinations a foundation to the research is established from which the proposition for an underlying elemental existence is evaluated and presented.

Artists such as Antony Gormley and the late Montien Boonma, who have investigated their own interrelated associations with the world are reviewed in the light of their personal considerations and visual explorations. Their disclosures together with the input of other artists pertinent to the examination help to conceptualise the artwork I have created within this inquiry.

While the diverse perspectives put forward by the individuals introduced throughout this exegesis are appropriate and significant, the predominant component of the research relies in general on my own distinctive revelations and contemplations. These are drawn from personal experiences and observations, which accentuate and substantiate the investigation. It is through various practices, including meditation and the visual research (culminating in a three-dimensional mandala installation titled, *Mandala of the Mind*) that I explore, express, and attempt to understand the fundamental connection that I share with all humans and the natural world.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE _____ i

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY _____ ii

STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY TO ACCESS _____ iii

ABSTRACT _____ iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS _____ v

TABLE OF CONTENTS _____ vi

LIST OF FIGURES _____ vii

INTRODUCTION _____ 1

CHAPTER 1: THE NATURE OF MIND _____ 6

CHAPTER 2: INTERBEING _____ 18

CHAPTER 3: ZEN _____ 28

CHAPTER 4: INTERBEING (THE SKETCHES) _____ 42

CHAPTER 5: MANDALA OF THE MIND _____ 54

CHAPTER 6: BRINGING THE MIND HOME _____ 63

CONCLUSION _____ 77

REFERENCES _____ 80

LIST OF FIGURES

	<i>page</i>
1. Kimsooja., <i>A Needle Woman</i> – (London, New Delhi, New York, Mexico City), (detail), 1999-2000. Eight channel video projection. Peter Blum Gallery, New York.	12
2. Zhang, Huan., <i>Big Buddha</i> , 2002. Wood, steel and stone, height, 3m.	13
3. Mariko, Mori., <i>Wave UFO</i> , 2002. Vision dome, projector, computer system. Fibreglass, carbon fiber, aluminium, magnesium. Deitch Project, New York.	26
4. Mariko Mori., <i>Wave UFO</i> , 2002. Video projection of viewers. Pre-recorded computer graphic content. Deitch Project, New York.	26
5. Gormley, A., <i>European Field</i> , (detail), 1993. Terracotta, approximately 35,000 figures 8-26cm each.	35
6. Gormley, A., <i>Post</i> , 1993. Cast iron, 197x53x36cm. Installation, Killerton Park, Exeter.	36
7. Stingel, R., <i>Untitled</i> , 1994. Cast urethane rubber, 47x54.6x22.8cm.	38
8. Phunstok, K., <i>Mao</i> , 1995. Acrylic on canvas, 108.5x77.8cm.	38
9. Buddha sheltered by Mucalinda, the serpent king, Cambodia; Angkorean period, early 12th century; bronze 58.4cm.	39
10. Shuko, S., (1422-1502), c.1470. <i>Zen Landscape</i> , 45x25cm.	39
11. King, G., <i>Interbeing (The Sketches)</i> , 2004. Paper clay, 36x60x50cm.	42
12. King, G., <i>Interbeing (The Sketches)</i> , 2004. Paper clay, 77x44x15cm.	44
13. King, G., <i>Interbeing (The Sketches)</i> , 2004. Paper clay, 64x33x28cm.	46
14. King, G., <i>Interbeing (The Sketches)</i> , 2004. Paper clay, recycled steel, wood, 150x160x50cm.	47
15. King, G., <i>Interbeing (The Sketches)</i> , 2004. Wood, ceramic, 80x100x37cm.	47
16. King, G., <i>Interbeing (The Sketches)</i> , 2004. Recycled wood, ceramic, glass, 48x53x37cm.	49
17. Van Gogh, Vincent., <i>The Chair and the Pipe</i> , 1889. Oil on canvas, 91.8x73.0cm.	49

	<i>page</i>
18. King, G., <i>Interbeing (The Sketches)</i> , 2004. Steel, cement, paint, sand, 60x33x33cm.	50
19. King, G., <i>Interbeing (The Sketches)</i> , 2004. Recycled wood, paint, sand, ceramic, newspapers, 42x45x30cm.	51
20. King, G., <i>Interbeing (The Sketches)</i> , 2004. Paper clay over red raku clay, wire, 35x65x54cm.	52
21. Tibetan sand mandala, 1996, 170x170cm. Created by the monks from Depung Loseling Monastery at the Newport Performing Arts Centre, Oregon, USA.	54
22. Goldsworthy, A., <i>Hard sand, carved out with a stick</i> , 1991, Mount Victor, South Australia.	57
23. A-Frame mud brick house on five-acre block Gippsland, Victoria, June, 2000.	58
24. King, G., Ink sketch for Installation; <i>Mandala of the Mind</i> , 19x17cm, 2004.	59
25. Omori Sogen Rotaishi., (1904-1994). <i>Enso</i> ; Zen circle, 65x65cm, Kyoto, Japan.	60
26. Boonma, M., <i>Temple of the Mind: Sala for the Mind</i> , 1995. Herbal medicines, wood, brass, 320x270cm. Collection of The National Art Gallery of Australia, Canberra.	68
27. Boonma, M., <i>Lotus Sound</i> , 1992. Terracotta bells, lotus covered with gold, 300x350x300cm. Collection of Bangkok Museum of Contemporary Art.	69
28. King, G., <i>Synthesized Images</i> , 2004. Ink on paper, 440x330cm.	70
29. King, G., <i>Synthesized Images</i> , (detail). 2004. Ink on paper, 65x104cm.	71
30. King, G., <i>Synthesized Images</i> , (detail). 2004. Ink on paper, 65x104cm.	71
31. King, G., <i>Synthesized Images</i> , (detail). 2004. Ink on paper, 65x104cm.	72
32. King, G., <i>Mandala of the Mind</i> , (detail), 2005. Wood, ceramic, 140x50x70cm.	73
33. King, G., <i>Mandala of the Mind</i> , (detail), 2005. Wire house, steel, compost, 90x70x70cm. Gallery floor size, 5x6m.	74
34. King, G., <i>Mandala of the Mind</i> , (detail), 2005. Liffey Falls, Tasmania, wire house, steel, compost, 90x70x70cm.	75
35. King, G., <i>Mandala of the Mind</i> , (detail), 2005. Beauty Point, Tasmania. Wire house, steel, compost, 90x70x70cm.	76
36. King, G., <i>Mandala of the Mind</i> , (detail), 2006. Steel, top-soil, wood, ceramic. Gallery floor size, 18mx13m. <i>Assessment</i> . Academy Gallery, Launceston.	79

INTRODUCTION

Twelve years ago I visited the National Gallery of Victoria to see an exhibition titled, *Van Gogh: His sources, genius and influence*. While there I happened to come across another presentation. In the main entrance, inside the Gallery was a group of Tibetan monks constructing a sand mandala. I did not know it then but as I stood there watching their intriguing display of colour and motion, a seed was being planted within my mind, which would germinate at a later time.

Around six years ago I was browsing in a bookstore and came across a book on Buddhism titled, *The Heart of The Buddha's Teachings – Transforming Suffering into Peace, Joy and Liberation* (Hanh. 1998). I had no understanding of Buddhism at the time, but the words in the title and the vague remembrance of the peaceful monks inspired me to purchase the book. After reading through the pages written by the Vietnamese Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh, I began to understand the relevance and possibilities presented by his words. An alternative way of looking at the world and myself was being revealed. Concepts including Non-Self, Impermanence, Interbeing and Buddha nature intrigued me. What interested me in particular was that the information contained in the book presented pragmatic solutions for negotiating with one's own mind in relationship to everyday situations.

After reading the book and understanding as much as possible at the time I experienced a series of dreams, which I believe were related directly to that text and its impact upon my mind. In one dream I was driving along a familiar road in my car. Suddenly, I was standing next to it being questioned by a big policeman. He told me the vehicle was defective and he and his team would strip it down to reveal the faults. The dream jumped me to the next scene, where I was walking down the road staring over my shoulder at the pile of bits and pieces, which had once been my car. In my mind I could hear the policeman telling me every part of it was 'no good'.

Around the same period of time another dream occurred, which I will describe in some detail.

The naked young woman and the dead Pope

I had a dream that a beautiful naked young woman and someone resembling the Pope (John Paul 2nd) were bound together. He was dressed in full Papal outfit including pointed Miter head wear. He also happened to be dead. The pair were wrapped together with white gauze in Egyptian mummy fashion. They were seated on the top bunk of a double bunk bed. The scene reminded me of a bedroom vaguely familiar from my childhood. The woman screamed to be liberated and when a stranger opened a door to the darkened room, the macabre yet beautiful scenario was revealed in the stark half-light. The woman pleaded with the silhouetted figure at the door to be freed from her unusual entanglement. Meanwhile, her dead companion flopped around aimlessly by her side. As she struggled with every movement, her pleading intensified to the point of hysteria. The dream ended abruptly, when I woke up startled, but the surreal images have remained vivid within my mind.

After experiencing these and other similar dreams, in conjunction with my study of Buddhism, I made a decision to utilize Buddhist wisdom, the love I have for nature and my art practice as the means to explore and re-evaluate my mind in relationship to the way I perceived myself, and the world around me.

Methodology

For various reasons I decided the island state of Tasmania would be the best environment to conduct this research. Most of my life had been lived on the mainland of Australia. However, between the ages of six and ten I lived at Beauty Point in northern Tasmania. Despite a difficult and disrupted childhood I enjoyed entertaining myself in the beautiful natural surroundings. In addition to my earlier emotional relationship with Tasmania, in 1993 I lost a much-loved brother and two close friends in a plane crash at the Launceston airfield. Although re-visiting particular sensitive issues is not an integral element of the inquiry, it is also not inconsequential because of the interrelated nature of this exploration.

Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, a doctrine originated in India taught by Siddhattha Gotama, the Buddha. The teachings of the Buddha have spread throughout the entire world and have been implemented in ways specific to the numerous countries and cultures, which have embraced Buddhism's principles of peace, hope, compassion and love. Many Westerners now recognize the potential inherent in the teachings of Buddhism.

One reason why they have so much appeal is that the fundamental credos relay a universal philosophy and psychology, which transcend national and cultural divides. Buddhism's spread throughout the Western world is highlighted by the fact that it is one of the fastest growing religions in Australia with more than '360,000 devotees' (Metlikovec. 2004).

At the beginning of this inquiry I made a decision to incorporate my Buddhist practice, including meditation into the research paradigm. There is a long-standing historical precedent for this genre of qualitative investigation. Throughout this exegesis I will substantiate the relevance and effectiveness of the Buddhist techniques, through which factual evidence and knowledge are obtained by practical applications, including phenomenological means. The techniques employed by Buddhists and others to prepare the mind for a deeper awareness of their relationship with the world have varied over millennia. However, what they all have in common is a fundamental meditative approach toward gaining first-hand insight into the essence of existence.

Through the practice of meditation I aim to discover the elementary nature of my relationship with all phenomena. Buddhist meditation facilitates this objective, because the primary goal of the practice is to connect with one's innate knowledge, consequently creating the psychological capacity to confirm a theoretical truth as an experiential fact. To achieve this level of awareness (an aspect of insight meditation) is to train the mind to transcend philosophical, speculative and egocentric thought. From this perspective direct inherent understanding supersedes notional concepts, supposition and dualistic perception. My creative and nature inspired experiences will be incorporated into the methodology as subject matter to stimulate the contemplative processes, subsequently creating the opportunity to reveal new insights into the relationship I share with all else. I will express my conclusions through the art created for this inquiry.

As Buddhist concepts, words and practices were to be an intrinsic component of my research, I decided to be involved as much as possible with a practising Buddhist community. The Kagyu Thigsum Chokyil Ghatsal Tibetan Buddhist Centre and Temple is approximately ten minutes walk from the Academy of the Arts where the artwork for my research was produced. The centre proved to be a rich source of Buddhist inspiration and wisdom thanks to the presence of Venerable Lama Shedrup, Venerable Lama Soten, the resident monks, nuns and the supporting Buddhist lay-practitioners. The co-relation between the Academy of The Arts, Tasmania's natural environment, the Buddhist centre

and my personal association with Tasmania, created an ideal situation within which to conduct this research.

Underpinning my empirical approach is an extensive, specific, philosophical, scientific, artistic and Buddhist literature review. The commentaries and opinions proposed by the individuals presented throughout this exegesis are analysed in the light of my own personal revelations. In addition, I will introduce contemporary artists who negotiate with similar themes and ambitions as my own. Their views and art are put forward, and in specific cases critically reviewed, as a means of placing into context my own visual outcomes.

My initial visual research culminated in an exhibition titled, *Interbeing (The Sketches)*, (University Of Tasmania, Academy of the Arts – Launceston, 2004). This body of work reflected specific issues pertaining to the core of my inquiry, where I investigated conventional relationships and the essential nature of existence.

The outcome of this research is an installation titled, *Mandala of the Mind*, (The University of Tasmania, Academy of the Arts – Launceston, June, 2006). This work is an original, contemporary visual presentation inspired and realized by the application of the various research methodologies.

Chapter Outline

Personal insights and Buddhist wisdom are examined in Chapter One in relationship to the way so-called reality is perceived and understood. This inquiry and the importance and relevance of meditation as a research methodology establishes an introduction and foundation to the exploration, which contributes to the subsequent investigations.

In Chapter Two, I investigate Interbeing, which is a word used by the Vietnamese Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh, to describe amongst other concepts, a deep Buddhist teaching known as Interdependent Co-arising. Interbeing is explored with reference to core research issues including human-relationships, environmental ethics and compassion. Although words such as interrelated, correlated, interdependent, co-shared and inter-subjective are used throughout the text to describe specific areas of the inquiry, within the context of this exegesis they all share the same fundamental meaning and importance as the concept of Interbeing.

In Chapter Three, I compare the considerations of the British artist Antony Gormley with the Buddhist tradition known as Zen. The comparison provides a theoretical and art related background to the philosophical and psychological elements, which are intrinsic to my own artistic creations.

The initial artworks created for this exploration, *Interbeing (The Sketches)* are examined in Chapter Four. This analysis provides further explanation of the experiential techniques I am engaging with to move towards my conclusions.

In Chapter Five, the work titled, *Mandala of the Mind*, the artwork that brings the investigation to a close is analysed within the context of summarizing the over-all research. In this chapter I revisit the genesis of the research, the Tibetan sand mandala, where I evaluate those aspects of it, which contrast and correspond with my own mandala creation. The installation, *Mandala of the Mind* formally concludes the research proposition; an exploration of the Buddhist philosophy on the interdependent nature of existence.

In Chapter Six, *Bringing the mind home*, further personal experiences and artworks are introduced, which are pertinent to the concluding installation. The understandings obtained from my time spent at a Vipassana meditation retreat are analysed in relationship to the insights derived by the artists Antony Gormley and Montien Boonma, who have also practised this particular type of insight meditation.

In the Conclusion I compare and contrast my conceptual and visual considerations with those of a selection of the artists previously presented in the main text of the exegesis. This final analysis will further clarify the distinctive nature of the work I have produced to conclude this examination.

Although aligning myself with one of the Tibetan schools of Buddhism, I made a decision to keep an open mind in relation to other Buddhist branches of thought and practice. The reason for this approach was to present my findings in a variety of ways facilitating an over-all, generally more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Because I borrow, adapt and interpret words and ideas from various Buddhist sources I take full responsibility and apologize for any errors that occur in the text in relation to the comprehension and presentation of the Dharma (Buddhist doctrine).

CHAPTER 1: THE NATURE OF MIND

The conditioned aspect of our minds can lead to numerous misunderstandings. Besides personal obstructions such as anxiety, anger, fear and paranoia, the human mind is also capable of creating problems on a global scale including terrorism, wars and environmental disasters. Human problems may appear to be obvious, however, the object of this research is for me to personally discover the essential elements that underscore the cohesive interconnected relationship that unites all humans and the environment.

Everything we perceive, conceive and create is born in the mind. Therefore, an investigation into the nature of the mind through both objective and subjective approaches forms an integral part of this research. A criterion within this aim is to investigate the question: ‘Who am I? It is not only an inquiry into, how do ‘I’ respond to the various stimuli ‘I’ encounter, but what is the nature of the ‘I’ that is doing the responding? In this chapter I introduce one of the research methods that is assisting me to answer these questions.

Meditation

For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated by prison movies. During a meditation session I became aware of why this particular genre of film had always intrigued me. The physical jail that holds the inmates had become a symbol for my own mind. In relationship to expanding one’s consciousness, Buddhist teacher and author, Patrul Rinpoche, tells the story of an old frog that had lived all his life in a dank well. One day a frog from the sea paid him a visit.

‘Where do you come from?’ asked the frog in the well.

‘From the great ocean,’ he replied.

‘How big is your ocean?’

‘It’s gigantic.’

‘You mean about a quarter of the size of my well here?’

‘Bigger.’

‘Bigger? You mean half as big?’

‘No, even bigger.’

‘Is it . . . as big as this well?’

‘There's no comparison.’

‘That's impossible! I've got to see this for myself.’

They set off together. When the frog from the well saw the ocean, it was such a shock that his head just exploded into pieces. (Rinpoche. 1992: 41).

In the initial stages of studying Buddhism the possibilities it presented seemed overwhelming and beyond the reach of my mind, which I believed was trapped into a fixed way of operating and perceiving the world and myself. Fortunately, much inspiration was derived from reading books written by the Buddhist masters, including the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama's list of conventional and spiritual credentials is long and impressive. He has studied Tibetan medicine, art, Sanskrit, and Buddhist philosophy (in which he has a doctorate). He also investigates Western science and philosophy, frequently engaging in discussion and debate with Westerners on these and other topics. He is the author of numerous books and has been awarded more than fifty Honorary Doctorates from various institutions around the world. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama is a practising Buddhist monk whose words of peace, love and compassion are commensurate with his humanitarian actions. Since 1959 he has lived in exile in India away from his homeland of Tibet. Although separated from his land of birth he is still the temporal and spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. The Dalai Lama has travelled to more than fifty countries promoting peace and working with world leaders to help resolve international problems, including human rights issues and environmental concerns. In 1989 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

I attended one of the Dalai Lama's free talks in Melbourne, Victoria, during his Australian visit in May, 2002. In a teaching guide produced after the tour, he wrote; ‘One does not have to believe in a particular religion or belong to a specific culture to cultivate the positive qualities of peace, kindness, compassion and tolerance. My religion is simple; my religion is kindness’ (Dalai Lama. 2002: 9). In another book, *An Open Heart*, he suggested; ‘ . . . through training our minds, with constant effort, we can change our mental perceptions or mental attitudes. This can make a real difference in our lives’ (Dalai Lama. 2001: 6).

If I wanted to understand and or change my mental patterns I had to be prepared to do the work myself. Obviously, this would not be easy. How was I to change a lifetime of ingrained habitual tendencies? The first mind training I attempted from the beginning of my practice was meditation. One aspect of meditation is to make a stand to reverse negative inclinations and replace them with new positive habits by ‘deliberately cultivating virtuous practices’ (Dalai Lama. 2001: 45-46).

Virtuous practices are an intrinsic component of Buddhist training because they are employed as a means of calming the mind to facilitate the meditation process. I will expand upon this element of the practice in the following chapters. Although meditation and other Buddhist mind trainings can be comprehended as distinct instructions and applications in their own right, they are all considered to be interrelated. Therefore, whenever the words meditation or practice are used throughout the paper they are to be understood not only for their specific practical meaning, but also in the broader context as encompassing all fundamental Buddhist doctrine. The word practice within the framework of this research is also inclusive of the artistic and nature inspired processes I am engaging with to move towards my conclusions.

It is empirical understanding that informs all Buddhist psychology and practice. This is an important point because the critical analysis of this research resides substantially within my own experiences. Therefore, the generally pragmatic Buddhist approach to this inquiry can be compared to the practical application of the Western philosophical theory known as phenomenology.

Christopher Macann, Professor of Philosophy at the Regents College in London, considered phenomenology to be the ‘most important philosophical tradition of the 20th century’ (Macann. 1993: ix). According to Wolfe Mays, former reader in philosophy at the University of Manchester, the significance of this movement continues to this day because ‘phenomenology is concerned with the primacy of consciousness and the active role played by the individual in making sense of the world outside’ (Curtis. 1978: 152). Essentially, phenomenology is about understanding and analysing one's own consciousness in relationship to the world from a basic first-person experiential viewpoint, free from prior assumptions and pre-conceptions. Any wisdom that is subsequently acquired is verified through one's own being. The Dalai Lama endorses this fundamental meditative approach. When discussing the role of phenomenology with psychologists, neuroscientists and

philosophers in connection to all Buddhist practice he said; 'No matter how sophisticated and complex a philosophical system is, at the end of the day, validation has to come by relating to one's experience' (Dalai Lama. 2003: 329).

Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, described the phenomenological approach as 'radical self-investigation' (Husserl. 1950: 153). According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (one of the four most eminent figures of the phenomenological tradition); 'Phenomenology is the study of essences and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status' (Merleau-Ponty. 1962: vii). This definition echoes my own intentions and Merleau-Ponty further ratifies the empirical and creative approach to this investigation when he asserted; 'Philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing truth into being' (Merleau-Ponty. 1962: xx). Later philosophers of the phenomenological movement argued over the methods and results established by Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and Heidegger, essentially because the study of Husserl and his contemporaries involved human meaning that transcended what could be expressed by words. Merleau-Ponty himself considered that the problem with the study of essences was 'finding definitions' (Merleau-Ponty. 1962: vii). Macann suggested that it was time to reconsider the meaning of 'being' where a viable, justifiable ethic becomes important so that the 'spiritualism of Eastern philosophy no longer stands out in opposition to the materialism of Western philosophy' (Macann. 1993: 209).

In reference to the issues exposed by Merleau-Ponty and Macann, my consideration is that Buddhist practice offers a viable, ethical and practical framework from which one can experience and reflect upon the states of consciousness achieved through the various, effective meditative approaches. Buddhists have been employing this basic phenomenological mind-set for over 2,500 years. Although I am inspired by the words written and spoken by the Buddhist masters, what affects me more is the knowledge that their message is derived from a consistent long term practical application of the diverse Buddhist mind practices that have developed their insight into the nature of existence.

As the practical phenomenological approach supports the subjective perspective, specific discoveries derived from modern scientific research provide the objective balance. Scientist Fritjof Capra wrote a book comparing Buddhist considerations with the findings being made by Quantum physicists. According to him; ' . . . both inquire into the essential

nature of things and both ways work towards discovering the different reality behind the superficial mechanistic appearance of everyday life' (Capra. 1992: 337). In the next chapter I will present an analysis of the parallels between Buddhism and contemporary physics.

The first time I sat down to meditate I realized how difficult the task would be. I seemed to thrive on the distractions of life and at any given time discovered that my mind had wandered far from home grasping onto some thought, concept, problem or desire. According to Sogyal Rinpoche, author of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, one purpose of meditation is to 'bring the mind home . . . to become aware of the sky-like nature of mind which introduces us to that which we really are, our unchanging pure awareness, which underlies the whole of life and death' (Rinpoche. 1992: 59). The Dalai Lama and Sogyal Rinpoche talk about meditation being; 'cultivating virtuous practices' and bringing 'the mind home'. They do so from the perspective of experienced Tibetan Buddhist meditators. How was I, as a novice, going to comprehend such vital Buddhist mind training? Fortunately, Buddhism does not have a monopoly on the practice of meditation. Anyone can learn to meditate. James Hewitt who researched various types and methods of meditation describes two answers to the question, why meditate? One reason is to attain 'mystical consciousness' (Hewitt. 1978: 1-2), or put another way, to arouse insight into the essential nature of existence. Meditation master Traleg Rinpoche points out; 'With meditation, with the lifting of the veils, things will become clearer' (Rinpoche. 2004). In Chapter Six I will review my experiences in relationship to the meditation practice known as Vipassana (Insight meditation), and its bearing on myself and the art being created for this inquiry. British artist Antony Gormley also practises this particular type of meditation, which he learnt in India. It is a method he has employed to understand his relationship with existence. I will analyse his art and experiential perspectives in Chapters Three and Six.

Hewitt describes the second reason to practise meditation:

Most Westerners are probably not taking up meditation for reasons solely connected with mystical goals. The good news has spread that meditation improves physical and mental health, principally by releasing stress. Medical scientists have investigated the physiological and psychological changes produced by the practice of meditation and found that it elicits a 'Relaxation Response' that is the opposite of the fight – or – flight response to danger. It is

a state of deep rest and relaxation that is both different from and in many ways superior to sleep. Meditation once or twice a day, on each occasion for about twenty minutes, will lead to marked improvements in physical health and mental clarity and equanimity (Hewitt. 1978: 1-2).

After reading Hewitt's book I decided to practise meditation initially for relaxation purposes. The next question was, how to meditate? On offer were a vast range of methods and postures, a few of which I attempted and considered unsuitable. Eventually, I discovered an approach that felt comfortable and also proved effective. Basically, Tranquil Wisdom Meditation, which was taught by the Buddha and conveyed in the Anapanasati Sutra (a Sutra is a written account of the Buddha's teachings), involves re-directing the mind of the meditator back to their breathing. This simple technique is repeated whenever the mind is distracted by a thought or emotional or physical sensation. One aim of this approach is to calm the mind by not getting excited and becoming attached to any annoyance. The endeavour is to recognize the disturbances and then let them go. If I experience fifty distractions I return to my breathing fifty times, becoming distracted is not the problem, staying distracted is.

My initial meditation practice involved the sedate approach of sitting quietly for various lengths of time and applying the breathing technique just noted. However, one aim of my research in Tasmania was to learn how to expand my practice beyond the formal meditation sessions into everyday life. The Vietnamese Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh, said; 'Doing everything mindfully is the practice of meditation, as mindfulness always nourishes concentration and understanding' (Hahn. 1998: 210). Hanh is referring to the practice of being constantly aware in the reality of the present moment. This state of awakened consciousness, when developed, has the capacity to deny the conscious and unconscious vagaries of the conditioned, unawakened mind. I have been fortunate to extend my study and understanding of all Buddhist practice including meditation under the guidance of two experienced and respected Tibetan Lamas. Venerable Lama Shedrup and Venerable Lama Soten have beautiful calm personas enhanced by years of meditative practice. Their relaxed but alert attitude has inspired my own practice. According to Hewitt; 'The deeply relaxed person is likely to experience an awakening of love and compassion, and an ability to appreciate more deeply the mystery and wonder of existence' (Hewitt. 1978: 1-2).

Kimsooja and Zhang Huan

Two individuals whose meditation practice directly influences their work are Korean artist Kimsooja and Chinese artist Zhang Huan. During the years 1999 and 2000 Kimsooja visited eight major cities including, Berlin, Cairo, Lagos, London, Mexico City, New York, Shanghai and Tokyo. In each city she stood in silent meditation for thirty minutes amongst a throng of humanity. Kimsooja uses the analogy of sewing to explain her work; ‘I considered my body to be a needle that weaves different people, societies and cultures together by just standing still’ (Bass. 2004: 215). Each performance was spliced onto an eight channel video projection and the completed work is titled, *Needle Woman* (fig.1).

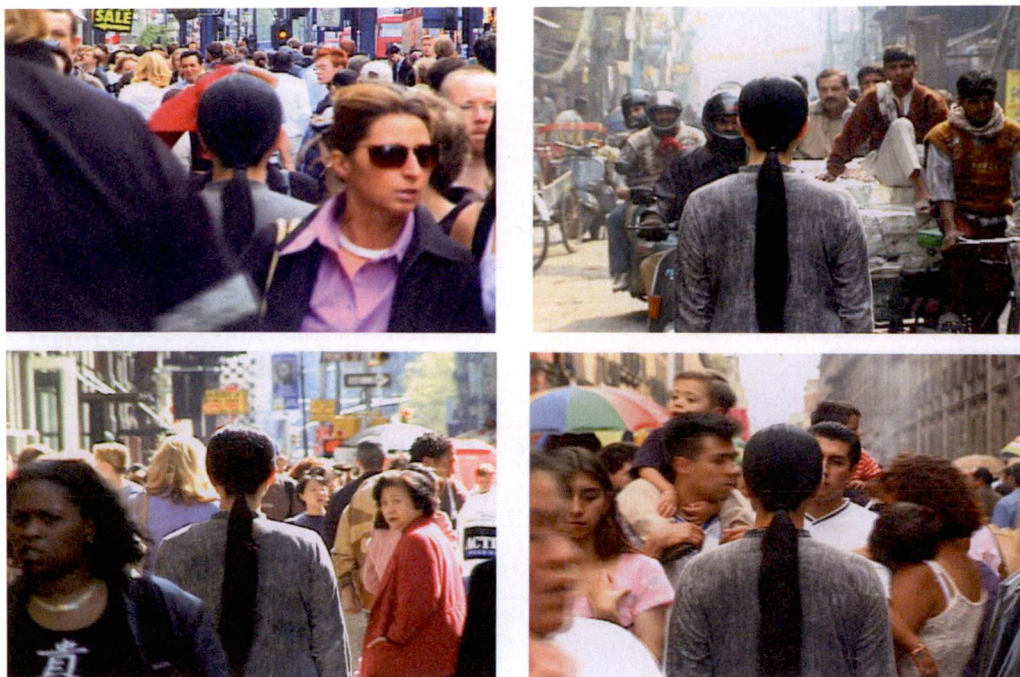


Fig. 1. Kimsooja. *A Needle Woman* – (London, New Delhi, New York, Mexico City), detail, 1999-2000. Eight channel video projection. Peter Blum Gallery, New York.

Mary Jane Jacob is a curator, professor and co-editor of the book, *Buddha Mind in contemporary art*. After viewing *Needle Woman*, Jacob commented that Kimsooja’s posture within the work brings the viewer directly into the experience, which has the capacity to create an ‘empathetic locus’. According to Jacob the work conveys ‘relationality and the interdependence of human beings and all beings in nature’ (Bass. 2004: 217).

Kimsooja considered the most important element to arise from the performances was her experience of ‘awakeness’ (Bass. 2004: 217). When she eventually became centred and focused she was able to liberate herself from her ‘self-consciousness’ and ‘engage’ with

the whole picture. Kimsooja's meditative approach enlightened her to the understanding of 'the world and people as oneness' (Bass. 2004: 216).

Zhang Huan is another artist whose work is inspired by meditative practice. The installation titled, *Big Buddha* (fig.2) was made in response to his contemplations on death and suffering and how Buddhist practice is assisting him to slow down and live a more natural life. Huan regards his meditation as a means that provides him with a way to 'deal with this world, to face tragedy, to alleviate suffering and to have a peaceful mind' (Bass. 2004: 240).

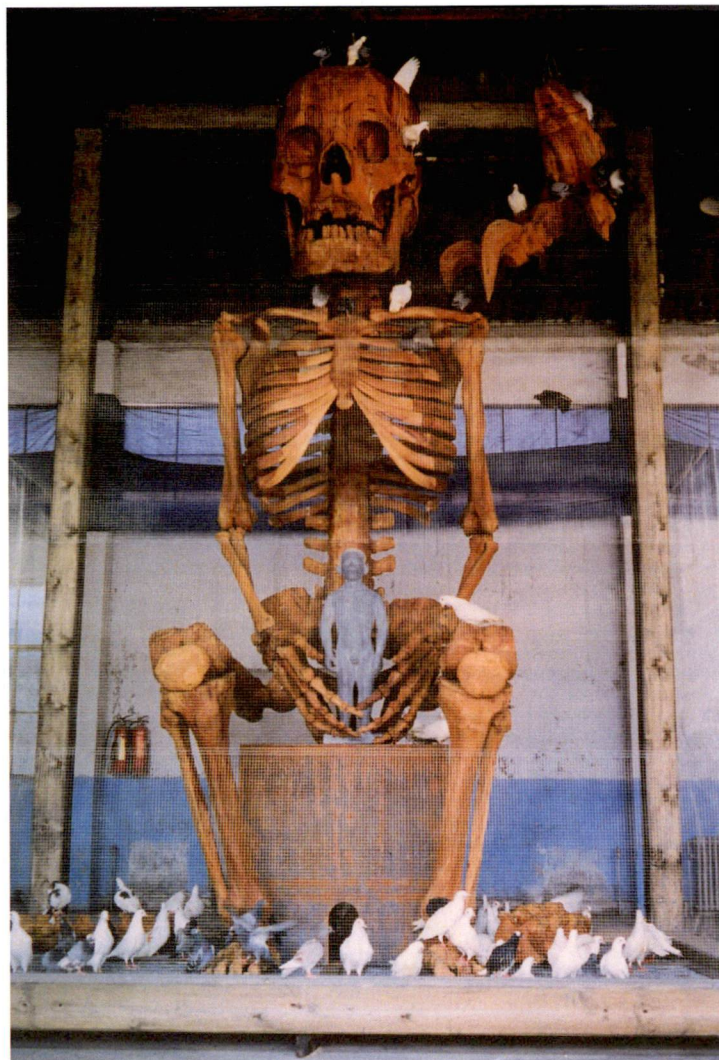


Fig. 2. Zhang, Huan. *Big Buddha*, 2002. Wood, steel, stone, height, 3m.

According to Jacob; 'Art and life are different dimensions of the same space. The imaginative vision of artists is one of the things that allows us to see and experience reality fully. Buddhist practice is another, sometimes they are connected' (Bass. 2004: 169).

I consider there to be no difference between the art I now create and my Buddhist practice. The artworks produced for this project are an interrelated formal representation of the various inquiries, experiences, meditations and other practices pursued and encountered prior to and during my research in Tasmania. The completed works become part of a spiritual and conventional evolutionary process because they stimulate further investigation into the relationships that exist between my environment and myself. I will expand upon these associations in Chapters Four, Five and Six, where the artwork created for this project is reviewed.

The Two Truths

If outcomes of my practice are to discover my 'true, deep inner nature' and 'experience reality fully', then what is my true nature? What is reality? Before moving to Tasmania to begin this project I lived on a secluded bush-block in the hills of Gippsland, Victoria. One of the advantages of living in a quiet, tranquil environment was the opportunity to practise meditation without too many disturbances. This enabled me to absorb into my mind and contemplate more easily the various Buddhist teachings being studied at the time. One of the instructions I considered was the Buddhist doctrine on the 'Two Truths'. The examination of this philosophy and its consequential relevance and significance throughout the exegesis will assist the reader to understand one of the fundamental issues underscoring this research.

The Buddhist point of view is that there are two truths, relative and absolute. Relative truth is what most of us deal with everyday. It is the truth according to the mental constructs and conditionings, which determine our personal way of perceiving and understanding, both ourselves and the world we live in. Obviously, if everyone comprehends and relates to the world from these divergent viewpoints there are bound to be misunderstandings, disputes, and as human history has revealed, major catastrophes.

According to Buddhism, absolute truth is the ultimate relationship that exists between the universe and oneself. Thich Nhat Hanh uses the analogy of waves and the ocean (water) to explain the relationship between relative and absolute truth; 'A wave can be recognized by signs – high or low, beginning or ending, beautiful or ugly. But in the world of the water, there are no signs . . . when the wave touches her true nature – which is water – all her complexes will cease, and she will transcend birth and death' (Hanh. 1998: 124-125). Although the waves representing all phenomena are transient and while they believe

themselves to be isolated from other waves, they are in fact never separated from each other and all else because of their shared relationship with the water, which is symbolic of the underlying ultimate reality. Therefore, when Thich Nhat Hanh says 'she will transcend birth and death' he is referring to the Buddhist concept that birth and death as we know it are notions and abstractions of the conditioned mind and subject specifically to relative not absolute truth.

Within Buddhism the term 'Buddha nature' is used to express absolute truth and ones capacity to understand and experience it. According to the literature this fundamental reality, which is in principle the essential nature of the universe is expressed by a variety of names; Hindus call it 'The Self,' 'Shiva,' 'Brahman,' and 'Vishnu'; Sufi mystics name it 'The Hidden Essence'; in Taoism, 'The Tao'; Buddhists also use the words 'Dharmakaya', 'Tathata' and 'Suchness' (Capra. 1999: 131). In the Zen tradition, the words 'Formlessness' and 'Emptiness' are used. Although these terms are employed to express, in essence, the inexpressible, and regardless of the fact they have developed from diverse cultural traditions, the primary characteristic common to them all is the expression of the experiential insight into the mind's ageless, elemental consciousness. The unobstructed mind holds the knowledge of the interrelated harmony of all things and events, including the understanding of all phenomena in the world as 'manifestations of a basic oneness' (Capra. 1999: 130). According to Mathieu Ricard, a doctor of molecular biology and a Buddhist monk for the past twenty-five years; 'In ordinary beings the potential perfection of the Buddha nature is buried under numerous obscuring layers formed by negative mental factors' (Revel. 1997: 102-103). I will develop the explanation of absolute truth when I write about it in association to other issues important to the research.

If absolute truth is Buddha nature or whatever name one chooses to apply then what is relative truth? Who is the 'I' in the conventional world of phenomena? The practice I have undertaken has assisted me to understand that ignorance has been one of the greatest hurdles to comprehending my elemental nature and the absolute relationship I share with the universe. Manifest to this has been the mistaken belief in the autonomous existence of an entity called 'I' or 'self'. The Dalai Lama said; 'Let us examine what 'I' or 'self' is. What is definite is that it does not exist' (Dalai Lama. 1998: 381). If the nature of relative existence is closely investigated, what becomes apparent is that all phenomena including our physical and mental being has been conditioned and determined by other conditioned states. The belief in a substantial world including a separate 'I' that is assumed to exist

among this endless flow of conditioned occurrences causes most of us to attach ourselves to, and grasp at things that have no independent existence, that are in fact impermanent. Buddhism is not teaching nihilism, suggesting everything is pointless because we are an illusion living in an illusory world. What it does teach is that the mistaken perception of all things in the world including one's self as being something separate from the whole have caused and will continue to cause us problems. People have reflected upon relative and or absolute truth throughout human history. In relation to relative truth William Shakespeare wrote:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (*Macbeth*, Shakespeare. 1978: 843).

Eastern mystics have not been the only ones contemplating absolute truth. Artist and poet William Blake:

To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour. (*Auguries of Innocence*, Blake. 1997: 490)

Pertaining to both relative and absolute truth, American writer on mythology and comparative religions Joseph Campbell considered:

There never was a time when time was not. Nor will there be a time when this kaleidoscopic play of eternity in time will have ceased. There is therefore nothing to be gained, either for the universe or for man, through individual originality and effort. Those who have identified themselves with the mortal body and its affections will necessarily find that all is painful, since everything – for them – must end. But for those who have found the still point of eternity, around which all, including themselves – revolves, everything is acceptable as it is (Campbell. 1962: 3).

According to Buddhist literature the Buddha acknowledged and understood conventional truth and the challenges it presents to everyone. He gave practical instructions to assist humans on their journey through Samsara (cyclic existence). A selection of these teachings and their relevance to this inquiry will be introduced and examined in the following chapters. The Buddhist point of view is not suggesting we subvert or try and destroy the 'I' or the ego of relative reality. On the contrary, a healthy ego with the right motivation can be of great assistance in the search for real peace, happiness and enlightenment. Within its religious framework, Buddhism is similar to other faiths because it also has its hierarchies, symbols, ceremonies and philosophies. However, one should not confuse hypothetical and intellectual understandings with experiential insights. The interest I have in Buddhism is derived from the fact that its basic principles and practices can be adapted to my own practical needs and goals. These applied methods assist me to understand myself, not in any religious or theoretical context, but from a moment-to-moment personal awareness. I see it like trying to get to the moon, the moon being myself. The vehicle I employ to get there, Buddhism or art for example is only as relevant as the truth it assists me to discover within myself. The truth being the fundamental relevance and relationship I share with all else.

What has been presented so far is a general introduction to aspects of a belief system, which outlines the concept for a unified existence. I am aware that subjects like the nature of mind and reality explained through a particular philosophical and psychological tenet (Buddhism) raise issues such as credibility within an academic context. From my perspective the authenticity of these and other Buddhist claims can only be verified through rigorous qualitative research. It may appear incongruous for a Buddhist to be questioning Buddhist philosophies and employing Buddhist practices as a device to do so. Nevertheless, my conclusions will be determined in general by the experiences realized within my own being. The awareness created through the meditative process encourages an unbiased evaluation, which subsequently informs the outcomes.

CHAPTER 2: INTERBEING

In this chapter I will continue my analysis of the nature of existence, which includes a background scientific perspective. I will also examine the relative practical consequences associated with our conventional way of life.

When I was ten years old I lived in a small town in northern Tasmania near the mouth of the Tamar river called Beauty Point. Regardless of difficulties at home or school I would on most occasions find solace in the surrounding environment. Whether fishing, swimming, playing in the local paddocks or just gazing at the clouds I always felt an affinity with nature. Thirty-five years after leaving Beauty Point I went back there and found the old jetty from which I used to fish and swim. I do not know the ten-year-old boy of my childhood anymore. However, I do appreciate his uncomplicated view of the world. With his help I will continue to explore and rediscover those aspects within myself that relate to and integrate with other human beings and the natural world.

The basic premise of Interbeing is that all things have the same intrinsic nature and from a relative perspective no conditioned thing can exist independently. All phenomena are dependent on other phenomena for their existence. For example, a flower is made of and contingent on non-flower elements, including the sun, water, earth and so forth. If this philosophy is extended and examined one may begin to understand that on a practical level none of us would or could come into being without the existence and assistance of other human beings and the natural environment. In this chapter I will present a concise comparison between the Buddhist world-view and the scientific findings that explain the relationship between all phenomena. I will then introduce some of the practical consequences of our co-shared existence followed by an outline on compassion and its relevance to Interbeing. Prior to my considerations regarding the nexus between Buddhism, science, the natural environment and humans I will present a description of some of my experiences of living with nature.

Living with nature

For five years I lived and made art in a small A-frame mud brick house situated on five acres of pristine bush-land in the hills of Gippsland, Victoria. Myself and my friend Billy (the cat) would venture into the bush on most days to explore and experience the variety of life forms inherent to the natural world of that region. Depending on the time of year I would stand or sit quietly and then observe the ever-changing flow and cycles of nature. I used to listen to the wallabies bounding through the bush making noises like giant men taking large sweeping strides. One time I came face to face with a huge tiger snake sunning itself on the branch of a fallen dead tree. I stood there awe-struck as the snake arched itself and hissed at me before slowly turning and slithering away. I stood beneath giant grey-gums listening to the leaves being whispered to by the wind. At night I would walk up a dirt road past a barn owl to a spot over-looking a sweeping cattle paddock. From there I had a good view to look at the stars and wonder about life and the universe. During the summertime I would sit under the make-shift veranda at the front of the house and watch bull-ants carrying their dead away to some secret burial ground. On occasions I would observe a family of koalas change trees just before a thunder-storm arrived. Sometimes a thunder and lightning-storm was so fierce it would knock out the electricity supply and I would sit there in the dark being surrounded and entertained by a sound and light show so spectacular only Mother Nature could have produced and directed it. There were many varieties of birds, including, blue-cheeked rosellas, white-throated treecreepers, galahs and sulphur-crested cockatoos. The birds ranged in size from tiny spotted pardalotes to a family of wedge-tailed eagles.

At this point I would like to share a poem I wrote, which was inspired by the bird-life I observed and listened to.

Bird poem

*The Kookaburra told me he's a symbol of my soul
And when the storm is raging or the car breaks down he doesn't lose control
When I go to have a closer look he looks me in the eye
Then laughs his laugh and laughs his laugh and glides off to the sky.*

*The Ibis and the Currawong play soccer in the rain
I'm filled with awe and wonder although it's just a game
And when the game is over I thank them for their grace*

Because, for a time and just a time, I'm taken from this place.

*When the magic Ravens decide to come to town
They swoop in like some witches dressed in charcoal gowns
They cast their spells and cast their roaming eyes
And tell me things I always knew, like, one day I'm going to die.*

*I heard the Shrike not long ago sing a song of love
Her voice went soaring through the air like a pure white Dove
She asked me very nicely if I'd like to sing along
So I joined her in the chorus and we sang her wondrous song.*

I consider myself fortunate to have lived in such an inspiring environment. It was while living there that I became interested in Buddhism. A consequence to the contemplation of the Buddhist teachings on karma, rebirth and compassion was the daily ritual of escorting blow-flies from the house unharmed, and making sure there were no live ants in the bath before taking a shower. The practices I have undertaken, which includes my own visceral feelings of oneness with nature have given me a particular understanding toward this research. As support to my experiences and deliberations I will now consider Interbeing, which comprises a scientific perspective, followed by an analysis of the practical implications associated with our interdependent existence.

The web of life

The matrix that connects us with each other and the planet can be viewed from any number of perspectives. One way of understanding this interrelationship is through our shared biology. When this planet was being formed billions of years ago a single cell was responsible for the formation of all life. According to geneticist David Suzuki; 'That cell was the ancestor of every living thing that exists today, one cell whose progeny eventually filled the oceans, covered the land and soared into the skies' (Suzuki. 1997: 41). I would like to emphasize that not only do we have this common bond with each other, we share it with all life. In his book, *The Seven Mysteries of Life*, scientist Guy Murchie, (whose writing I regard as poetically inspiring) considered our ancestry with the natural world:

... with our present swift growing knowledge of evolution, it is not hard to approximate the date of a common ancestor. Thus the great apes are

approximately man's millionth cousins. Most of the larger mammals are within the range of ten-millionth cousins of man. All but the tiniest of animals roughly within that of billionth cousins ... (Murchie. 1979: 359)

This relationship extends beyond the human and animal world. Murchie continues:

... while the rest of life, including microbes, plankton, bacteria and viruses, comes generally within the trillionth-cousin magnitude. ... our quadrillionth cousinhood surely must include the mineral kingdom and even the super-organism of Earth herself with all her elements. ... by applying celestial genetics from the time Earth's closest ancestor (the sun) spawned his family of planets and moons, we discover close sidereal cousins among the Milky Way's stars and more distant ones in remoter galaxies and super-galaxies – all these being relatives of estimable propinquity, which, if you can stomach specificity to its ultimate, bring every last one of them within an ordinal compass of cousinhood delineable within about twenty figures (Murchie. 1979: 359).

Our association with the cosmos is greater than a shared biology and the bonds of cousinhood. Quantum physicists conduct practical trials and testing to assist them in understanding our connection to the universe and how it functions. Their experiments pertaining to the subatomic realm reveal that, 'all of the things in our universe (including us) that appear to exist independently are actually parts of one all-encompassing organic pattern and that no parts of that pattern are ever really separate from it or from each other' (Zukav. 1979: 72-73). This 'all-encompassing organic pattern' is made up of matter. The air that we breathe, the stars we look upon, the DNA that links us to our past and future generations, everything is made from atoms and subatomic matter. Subatomic particles transcend the building-block status assigned to them by Newtonian physics because they also interact 'with the surrounding environment . . . therefore, cannot be seen as an isolated entity, but have to be understood as an integrated part of the whole' (Capra. 1992: 92). The 'all-encompassing organic pattern' and the 'whole' referred to by Zukav and Capra are equated to the quantum field in physics and correspond in relative terms with the 'Tao', 'Brahman' and 'Emptiness' presented and considered in Chapter One. Comparing the quantum field to the Buddhist philosophy on absolute reality, Capra wrote; 'Like the quantum field, it gives birth to an infinite variety of forms which it sustains and eventually,

reabsorbs' (Capra. 1999: 212). Gary Zukav and Fritjof Capra wrote books comparing Buddhist considerations with Quantum scientific discoveries. In relationship to Quantum revelations David Bohm, former professor of physics at Birbank College, University of London said; 'One is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analysability of the world into separately and independently existent parts' (Zukav. 1979: 315). Put simply, in another book analysing our affiliation with the universe, he wrote; 'We are part of it and it is part of us' (Hiley. 1994: 449).

The Dalai Lama considers scientific research and progress should work together with meditative exploration and development since both are concerned with the similar aims of discovering the underlying truth of existence. 'One proceeds through experiment by instruments, and the other through inner experience and meditation' (Dalai Lama. 1998: 9). Scientific research and its discoveries have their limitations and critics. Tim Flannery, scientist, and author of *The Future Eaters* said in an interview; 'Almost every scientific theory will be proved wrong' (Flannery, 2003). According to Merleau-Ponty; 'We must reawaken our basic experience of the world of which science is a second order expression' (Merleau-Ponty.1962: viii).

It was from primary experiential wisdom acquired through the meditative process that the Buddha formulated his doctrine 2,500 years ago. According to Buddhist author Padmasiri de Silva; 'The Buddha saw the world as a network of many-sided, reciprocal causal patterns which interact. All processes within the universe are subject to change. The object and the subject in experience have no independent existence' (de Silva. 1998: 40). The Buddha's views on our interconnectedness supported by the findings of modern science relate back to the examination of reality in Chapter One. Our belief in the 'I' as a separate independent entity, distinct from everything else, has created problems in the way we perceive ourselves in relationship to the rest of the universe. On this point Albert Einstein said:

A human being is part of the whole, called by us the universe. A part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must

be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures (Suzuki. 1997: 26)

Since becoming acquainted with Buddhism I have discovered that fundamental Buddhist ethics and principles are not founded on any rules of humankind, they are based on the laws of the universe. Buddhist author K. Sri Dhammananda said; ‘Buddhist ethical values are intrinsically a part of nature, and the unchanging law of cause and effect (Karma)’ (Dhammananda. 1993: 146). One of the initial teachings of the Buddha derived from his concerns about the destruction of all forms of life, and how compassion and love can be used as substitutes for the behaviour of greed, aggression and ignorance. According to de Silva, if nature becomes the object of human greed, and the victim of their aggressive instinct, ‘a non-violent and gentle attitude towards nature is not possible. A man driven by greed or envy loses the power of seeing things as they really are’ (de Silva. 1998: 115). All Buddhist teachings and practices are relevant to the concept of Interbeing in that they are also interconnected. Therefore, the doctrine on Interbeing encompasses basic Buddhist principles and precepts including non-violence, right-action, right-speech and right-thought. Interrelated with these fundamental Buddhist practices are the instructions on loving kindness, compassion, equanimity and joy. According to the Buddhist world-view, a simple guide as to whether an undertaking is good or bad is; if the action is based on greed, hatred or delusion or whether it is founded on generosity, love and wisdom. This criteria is applicable to thought, word or deed. Buddhist moral principles can be summarized by three simple universal guidelines: Avoid evil; do good; and tame your own mind. These and other Buddhist mindfulness trainings are incorporated into my practice and are therefore inclusive to the research paradigm.

Before continuing the analysis of the Buddhist teachings on compassion in relationship to Interbeing, I would like to emphasize the practical importance and relevance of this concept. Irrespective of our views concerning the neighbours or environmental issues, the fact remains we depend on each other and the natural world for our day-to-day existence and well-being. Without the kindness, expertise and hard work of our fellow humans we could not hope to survive and prosper. The reliance we have on others is unavoidably woven into the fabric of every aspect of our lives, including our enjoyment, prosperity, health, subsistence and spirituality. Psychiatrist Howard Cutler co-wrote the book, *The Art of Happiness* with the Dalai Lama. After hearing and contemplating a speech the Dalai Lama made about our dependence on others he noted:

My precious self-reliance was a complete illusion, a fantasy. As this realization dawned on me, I was overcome with a profound sense of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings. I felt a softening. Something. I don't know. It made me want to cry (Dalai Lama. 1998: 74-75).

Our daily dependence on the environment is just as significant. The air, sun, water and earth provide us with the means for survival. It stands to reason, we should respect and protect these fundamental natural elements at all costs, our lives depend upon it. Recurring environmental disasters and destructions plaguing our planet are more than newspaper headlines and by-lines, they are real threats to all life forms.

The imbalance of adding excessive polluting fossil fuel emissions into the atmosphere and at the same time stripping the vegetation from the planet creates a highly critical imbalance. According to ecologist David Shearman:

Every single hectare of rain forest takes from the atmosphere one tonne of carbon dioxide per year ... Conversely, our present annual rate of deforestation of 150,000 square kilometres – two per cent of the Earth's tropical forests – puts two billion tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year. On this basis alone forests are essential to our sustained health and well-being (Shearman. 1997: 60)

The correlation between clean air and trees is obvious. Deforestation has been endangering this delicate nexus for some time and continues to do so. What is not so obvious is the effect deforestation is having in other areas. Forests evaporate large amounts of water into the atmosphere, which cools the environment and creates rainfall, which in turn forms rivers that supply water to millions of acres of land for 'food production throughout the world' (Shearman. 1997: 60-61). Due to deforestation 90 different Amazonian tribes are thought to have disappeared in the last century and 5-10% of forest species will become extinct every decade (Rainforest Alliance, 2003). In addition to the negative effects caused by deforestation, the extensive use of coal, oil and natural gas in the last fifty years has concentrated excessive amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. Many scientists believe this is a major factor contributing to global warming, consequently creating the greatest climate change in the last '10,000 years' (Brazier, 2005). The effects of increased global warming

includes flooding as the icecaps melt and extreme weather fluctuations because of shifting currents in the oceans. These may be just statistics to some people, but to the trees, animals, birds and communities affected by deforestation and atmospheric pollution it is a real life and death struggle.

In the year 2000, United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan initiated the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, involving more than 1,360 experts world-wide. The results of their investigations were published on 30-March-2005. Chris Brazier wrote an editorial on the assessment outcomes in the environmental magazine *NI*:

It paints a chilling picture of environmental decline – and offers a dire warning to politicians, who continue to put ecological concerns on the backburner, that humanity is now trembling on the brink of disaster. . . At the heart of this Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is a stark warning. Human activity is putting such strain on the natural functions of the Earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted . . . it is up to all of us now to put it at the front and centre of political life' (Brazier, 2005).

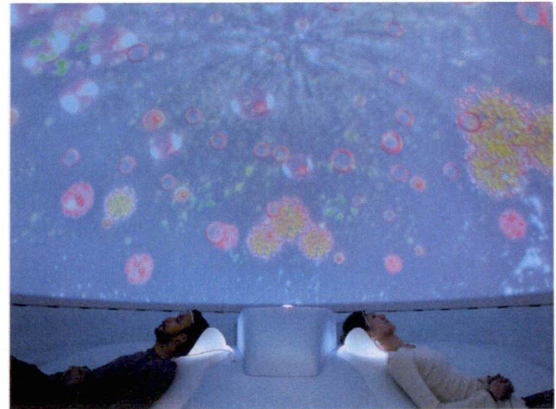
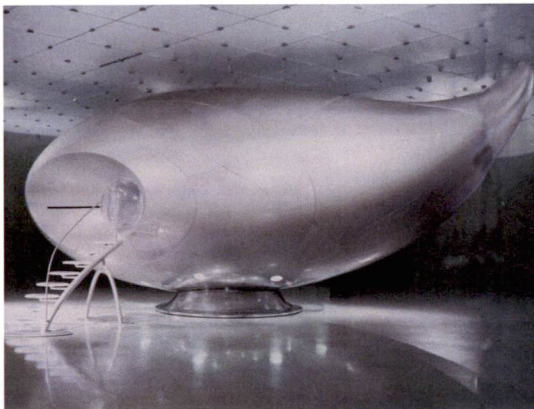
Many humans are beginning to heed the warnings. In 2004 on the mainland of Australia thousands of protestors campaigned against Tasmania's forestry practices. In a newspaper interview Tasmanian Greens leader Peg Putt said, 'There is a quickening and an intensifying campaign out there and it is being fuelled by the absolute intransigence of the Tasmanian Government' (Putt, 2004). Furthermore, in the U.S., despite the Bush administration's failure to sign up to the Kyoto protocol, mayors from across America representing more than 25 million people are taking matters into their own hands. They are implementing the United State's Kyoto environmental target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 7% before 2010. Ray Nagin, the mayor of low-lying New Orleans, said he joined the coalition because 'a projected rise in sea levels threatens the very existence of New Orleans'. The devastation created by hurricane Katrina in late August 2005 highlights the vulnerability of New Orleans. The mayor of Maui County in Hawaii signed up because he was frustrated by 'Washington's failure to recognise the scientific consensus that climate change was happening because of human activity'. According to mayor Greg Nickels who initiated the programme; 'This campaign has clearly touched a nerve with the American people' (Guardian, 2005).

In addition to the oxygen – carbon-dioxide exchange between trees and humans, Suzuki considers every breath we take to be a sacrament, ‘an affirmation of our connection with all other living things, a renewal of our link with our ancestors and a contribution to generations yet to come’ (Suzuki. 1997: 38).

The importance and relevance of the interrelationship that exists between all humans and the natural environment is being considered through various means by a selection of contemporary artists, including Mariko Mori.

Mariko Mori

Mariko Mori is an internationally recognized artist who explores the nature of existence through her Buddhist and artistic processes. Mori claims Buddhist practice has been helpful in opening her mind to the reality that she is ‘part of the whole’ (Bass. 2004: 261). This realization has led her to acknowledge the importance of balance and harmony as essential requirements for understanding her relationship with the world. Mori said; ‘I think that for any form of living being, the life it’s given is actually sustained by others. Not only by other people but also by water or food or earth’ (Bass. 2004: 260).



Figs. 3,4. Mariko, Mori. *Wave UFO*, 2002. Vision dome and video projection of viewers inside the dome. Projector, computer system with pre-recorded content. Fibreglass, carbon fibre, aluminium, magnesium.

Mori’s *Wave UFO* project (figs.3,4) is designed to lead the viewer away from their usual relative, dualistic way of viewing the world. She is encouraging people to re-connect to their primary unconditioned interrelated relationship with the universe. To achieve her aim she created an inter-active environment inviting the viewer ‘to participate in other realms of awareness’ (Bass. 2004: 271). According to Mary Jacob, who reviewed the installation; ‘The work offers the possibility for self-transformation, using art to make minds more

open' (Bass. 2004: 260). Mori's approach involves collaboration with many people who bring various expertises to the project; 'By sharing we become one . . . The process is also a learning experience for me, not just about making work, but about life' (Bass. 2004: 261). In Chapter Four I will present and examine a body of visual work, which has been influenced by my own experiences in relationship to Interbeing.

The literature reviewed reveals how inextricably linked we are to each other and the planet. According to Jacob; 'When we understand in a deep and pervasive way our interconnectedness, compassion flows' (Bass. 2004: 168). Compassion within the Buddhist context is the wish that all sentient beings be free from suffering. All humans have the capacity to understand this basic point of view because we all share the same fundamental desire to be happy and pain free. Employing compassion toward others also has significant benefits for ones self. According to Cutler:

In recent years there have been many studies that support the idea that developing compassion and altruism has a positive impact on our physical and emotional health . . . Studies have shown that reaching out to help others can induce a feeling of happiness, a calmer mind, and less depression (Dalai Lama. 1998: 126-127).

I understand Interbeing as the world living within my mind. If I create anger toward anyone or anything I am actually creating anger within and toward myself. If I destroy the environment I destroy myself. By practising compassion toward others and the planet I am doing myself a favour.

The ten-year-old boy of my childhood is still innocently looking at the clouds and the trees. I am trying to get back to him with some good, helpful, advice and information that will assist him on his journey throughout life. It seems only fair, he is helping me.

CHAPTER 3: ZEN

Buddhism, nature, art and personal experience are the dominant influences guiding this research. In this chapter I will examine how all these elements are accommodated and expressed within one particular school of Buddhism, Zen. I will also explore the parallels between the Chinese philosophical tradition known as Tao and the principles that underscore Zen. These matters will be analysed in relationship to my own considerations.

One day, the Buddha was giving a talk to a great assembly of monks, nuns and laypeople. At one point, he held up a flower, displayed it to the crowd and remained silent. Only Mahakasyapa, one of his monk disciples, understood his meaning and smiled. The Buddha smiled back (Batchelor. 1999: 20).

This is considered to be the first Zen transmission between master and disciple.

I understand Zen as being an intriguing mix of the mystical and the conventional. The mystical can be related to Zen's emphasis on meditation practice, which meditation master Chogyam Trungpa referred to as 'Cool Boredom' (Trungpa. 1999: 90). Conversely, Zen considers all the worldly circumstances experienced by humans as valuable, potential teachers that can assist one to understand and improve their ordinary and sacred journeys.

The Japanese word Zen translates as meditation. By its nature Zen is not favourable to intellectual interpretation. It is first and foremost an experiential exercise. With this in mind in this chapter I will examine those Zen principles and practices that are related to the methods I am employing to inform and guide the artwork being created for this research. Zen developed within China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan. Although Zen has influenced and been influenced through these diverse countries and cultures, the core teachings of Buddhism remain the foundation to all Zen belief and practice. The fundamental principles common to all Buddhist schools are:

- the belief in rebirth (cyclic existence);

- the belief in natural law and Karma, which includes the view that all conditioned phenomena are constantly changing and without independent existence, including our physical and mental being;
- the belief that one can be liberated from cyclic existence through the termination of greed, delusion, hatred and attachment; and
- the belief in the teachings of the Buddha.

Soon after arriving in Tasmania I took refuge, which in Buddhist terms indicates I became a Buddhist. This involved taking part in a small ceremony presided over by two Tibetan Lamas. I took refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma (teachings) and the Sangha (Buddhist community). Basically, taking refuge entails assuming full responsibility for one's own actions, thoughts and speech with assistance and guidance from the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Buddhism explains within its tenets many practices, which the individual can employ to assist their mind to become more calm and aware. In Chapter Two I considered Interbeing and compassion. One example of how these elements are incorporated into a practical situation is highlighted by the Buddhist teachings titled, 'Mother sentient beings'.

Mahayana Buddhism teaches that because of our many previous births, at some time or other, every living, feeling being that exists, in addition to possessing Buddha nature, has been at one time or another, in the past our mother. Being mindful of these basic Buddhist beliefs is meant to elicit within me equanimity, love, compassion, joy and respect whenever I am dealing with my fellow sentient beings. Unfortunately, the ego-centric aspect of my mind still has quite a say in this matter. Nevertheless, the point is clear, whether it is true or not that the ant I am avoiding stepping on is my mother from a previous life, my acceptance of this practical approach to the teachings on Interbeing, helps to train my mind to be more caring and compassionate. This in turn will benefit others, myself, and the ant. Sceptics may have trouble accepting this essential Buddhist philosophy and psychology, however, what they cannot refute is the positive, practical intent and motivation that underpins all Buddhist practice.

In addition to these basic principles and practices, Zen specifically follows the Mahayana Buddhist Path, which teaches, the foremost way of assisting all sentient beings is to strive toward total enlightenment within oneself.

Total enlightenment in Buddhist terms points to the fact that within all humans there is the potential to experience their absolute nature and relationship with the universe. According to the literature the Buddha attained total enlightenment. He experienced directly through an extensive meditative practice the absolute interrelationship that exists between all phenomena. The Buddha talked about his experiences and pointed the way for other humans to practice. Ultimately it is up to the individual to have this realization for him or herself. The key word here is realization. Satori equates to comprehending oneself and the world from an enlightened, experiential perspective in contrast to an intellectual or philosophical understanding. According to Buddhist author D.T. Suzuki; 'When one's mind is poetically or mystically or religiously opened, one feels that even in every blade of wild grass there is something really transcending all venal, base human feelings' (Fromm. 1960: 2). Korean Zen master Chinul, considers enlightenment to be sudden, 'followed by gradual practice which in turn might help to provoke more awakenings followed by more practice' (Batchelor. 1999: 4).

Over the years Zen masters have taught a variety of practices to help their students realize Satori for themselves. One method used by the Masters in Japan is called 'Rinzai; a series of Koans'. The student is given a koan to study and meditate on similar to; 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?' This technique is used to help the student understand that their usual, habitual, analytical way of thinking to solve the koan is of no use. The student progresses through the series of koans experiencing direct intuitive insights and psychological understandings until they complete the process. According to Merleau-Ponty; 'Looking for the world's essence is not looking for what it is as an idea once it has been reduced to a theme of discourse; it is looking for what it is as a fact for us, before any thematization' (Merleau-Ponty. 1962: xv). Although I am inspired by the Buddhist masters who teach from a so-called enlightened perspective, my views on realization are intrinsic to the experiential truths I discover within the impartial practices I engage with. I regard Martine Batchelor's views on the faith in realization as an appropriate affirmation to my own conclusions on this subject:

At the beginning, it is more like a belief and we feel rather separate from it. But as we continue, we see some changes in ourselves, we stop grasping so much at details, we open to possibilities, and peace and clarity become more familiar. We see ourselves better, we start to have faith in ourselves and the Zen practice. When suddenly we have some insight like Master Huangpo, we realize that this is not special, just our natural way of being. As he said: When at last in a single flash, you attain full realization, you will only be realizing the Buddha nature, which has been with you all the time. However, now our vision is screened so we have to practice, but this practice is sustained by great faith (Batchelor. 1999: 13).

Faith grows with practice and the more I practise the more faith I have. Not a blind faith, but as has already been noted, a faith born from empirical investigation and direct insight. There is a paradox at work here between faith and questioning. The practices I have undertaken accommodates both easily, as they are seen as complementary and nurturing each other.

Zen and nature

Zen teaches that nature can assist us to understand our true relationship to the universe. Many Zen masters have spoken eloquently on this subject including Master Yunyen; ‘ . . . listen to the dharma talk given by a bird, presented by a flower. It does not require supernatural powers; on the contrary it is the awareness that we are connected to all things and that everything can speak to us about life, impermanence, emptiness, Buddhahood’ (Batchelor. 1999: 52-53).

I love nature, it is a non-possessive, respectful, altruistic love. When I visit the trees, the ocean or the stars we communicate without words or concepts. I feel comfortable in the company of these beautiful beings and it is the essence of these experiences that I am learning to expand into a greater awareness of my interrelationship with all life, and subsequently incorporate into my art practice. One way of explaining the nexus that exists between nature, Buddhism and my artistic processes is to make a comparison with the art of Japanese Zen.

Japanese Zen manifests easily into everyday affairs. Its influences are evident in their tea ceremonies, garden designs, paintings and calligraphies. In Japan these pursuits are known

as a 'Do' or a 'Tao' (a way toward enlightenment). 'All these arts are expressions of the spontaneity, simplicity and total presence of mind characteristic of the Zen life' (Capra. 1999: 125). Although I am not steeped in any Zen tradition I can appreciate and relate to the universal principles inherent in Zen thought and practice, to this end I am exploring and expressing many Zen related characteristics within my own creative processes. According to Yasuichi Awakawa, the author of *Zen Painting*; 'Zen art and literature is simply the expression of the essential connection between Zen and nature . . . as all of nature is seen as a manifestation of the divine' (Awakawa. 1977: 23).

What interests me as an artist are those fleeting moments when all else stops, when there is no confusion or misunderstanding, no struggle. For me these succinct points in time can be experienced through my relationship with nature. In most cases when I depict nature I am depicting myself, there is no difference as far as I am concerned and when these works are created they are made from the viewpoint of those brief instances of wonderment and non-attachment. Although I consider nature to be a dominant influence within my work I recognize much of the art I create as nature itself, made from earth, air, water and fire created by earth, air, water and fire. The artwork I have created within this inquiry will be critically analysed in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

Tao

The Chinese classic, *Tao Te Ching* (Virtue of the way) was written by Lao Tzu in about the 6th century B.C. It has been translated more than any other written work except for *The Bible*. The *Tao Te Ching* is a natural philosophy, which conveys a simple message; free yourself from your struggles and live in harmony with nature. The fundamental principle underlying Taoism is that all life is an integrated part of the whole and the source of this life is the Tao. Because humans are intrinsically linked with the Tao they have the potential to become attuned to the harmonious, interrelated ever-changing nature of existence. The essence of Tao cannot be truly understood in any relative terms. However, conventional methods can assist one to live in accordance with Taoist principles, including practising unconditional love, compassion and humility. Taoism and Zen have been inter-linked ever since Buddhism arrived in China in the 1st century A.D, where Zen originated and was known as Chan. The Tao can be equated to the Buddhist concept of absolute truth (emptiness), which was examined in Chapter One and will be further analysed in this chapter. According to Buddhist author Edward Conze; 'Taoist terminology was often deliberately used to explain Buddhist concepts' (Conze. 1980: 67). Lao Tzu's poems,

inspired by his meditative insights, have been another source of inspiration and I would like to share some of his words.

Thirty-Four

The great Tao flows everywhere, both
to the left and to the right.
The ten thousand things depend upon
it; it holds nothing back.
It fulfils its purpose silently and makes
no claim.
It nourishes the ten thousand things,
And yet is not their lord.
It has no aim; it is very small.
The ten thousand things return to it,
Yet it is not their lord.
It is very great.
It does not show greatness,
And is therefore truly great.

Thirty-Seven

Tao abides in non-action,
Yet nothing is left undone.
If Kings and Lords observed this,
The ten thousand things would develop naturally.
If they still desired to act,
They would return to the simplicity of formless substance.
Without form there is no desire.
Without desire there is tranquillity.
And in this way all things would be at peace.

Fifty-Three

If I have even just a little sense,
I will walk on the main road and my only fear will be of straying from it.
Keeping to the main road is easy,
But people love to be sidetracked.

When the court is arrayed in splendour,
The fields are full of weeds,
And the granaries are bare.
Some wear gorgeous clothes,
Carry sharp swords,
And indulge themselves with food and drink;
They have more possessions than they can use.
They are robber barons.
This is certainly not the way of Tao.

Forty-Three

The softest thing in the universe
Overcomes the hardest thing in the universe.
That without substance can enter where there is no room.
Hence I know the value of non-action
Teaching without words and work without doing
Are understood by very few. (*Tao Te Ching*, Tzu. 1972: 20-30).

I feel these words express many of the Buddhist principles and ideas that have been and will be explored. 'Few doubted that the truth as it had been seen by the Buddha and the sages of China, Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, was one and the same' (Conze. 1980: 67).

Zen meets Gormley

One aspect of the art I create is to give form to the formless. From an Eastern perspective formlessness is what underlies all reality. Because this absolute truth cannot be defined in any relative terms it is said to be empty or formless. This does not imply however that the formless state is non-existent. 'It is, on the contrary, the essence of all forms and the source of all life' (Capra. 1999: 211). According to Shin'ichi Hisamatsu author of *Zen and the Fine Arts*; 'Formlessness in Zen is not the concept of being formless, but rather the reality of the self that is formless. It is this true or formless self that we call Zen . . . in brief, Zen is the self-awareness of formlessness. It is this self-awareness – or self – that Zen calls Buddha' (Hisamatsu. 1971: 48).

British artist Antony Gormley considers formlessness through his work, and when he said, 'I want to confront existence' (Gormley. 1995: 140), I was immediately intrigued. My

investigation into Gormley revealed a few similarities between us, including a Catholic upbringing and attendance at a Catholic school. At an early age Gormley had a sense of not belonging. He experienced a feeling that there was another place where things were different and that was where he wanted to be. I can remember having the same feeling when I was about five or six. Similar to Gormley, I also employ the figure in much of my art and like him, I work with a variety of materials. We are both influenced by Buddhism and practise Vipassana meditation, and when Gormley said; 'One of the bases of my work is that it has to come from real, individual experience' (Gormley. 1995: 18), I relate this to my own empirical approach. In addition, Gormley's affinity with the natural world parallels the rapport I share with nature.



Fig. 5. Gormley, Antony. *European Field*, detail, 1993. Terracotta, approximately 35,000 figures, 8-26cm.

I will now consider aspects of Gormley's experiences and related inquiries in relationship to his art, which mirror many of my own investigations and observations. For the *Field* series of works (fig.5) Gormley encouraged the participation of numerous people to create the multitude of clay figures required for the installation. On occasions, as many as 35,000

pieces were produced. Gormley is inviting us to re-connect to the earth, to come face to face with our co-shared existence at a fundamental level, and to question our endeavours in relationship to ourselves and all else. Gormley emphasized this point when he said; 'Nature is within us. We are sick when we do not feel it. The sickness of feeling separate from the world is what is killing it. We are earth above ground, clothed by space, seen by light' (Gormley. 1995: 124). Gormley is attempting to transcend the concept of separateness. He considers his art as a means of allowing the viewers to contemplate their own interrelationship with existence, a contemplation he said, that cannot be 'articulated' (Gormley. 1995: 12). Gormley's interrelated considerations are influenced by his Vipassana (insight meditation) practice, which is underlined by fundamental Buddhist principles. According to Capra; 'In our everyday life, direct intuitive insights into the nature of things are normally limited to extremely brief moments. This is not the case in Eastern mysticism where they are extended to long periods and ultimately, become a constant awareness' (Capra. 1999: 37). In an essay written about the influence Buddhism has had on Gormley and his art, John Hutchinson noted; 'What is vital, though, is the sense of composure and self-awareness that Buddhism teaches, for this is frequently manifested in Gormley's work' (Gormley. 1995: 61).

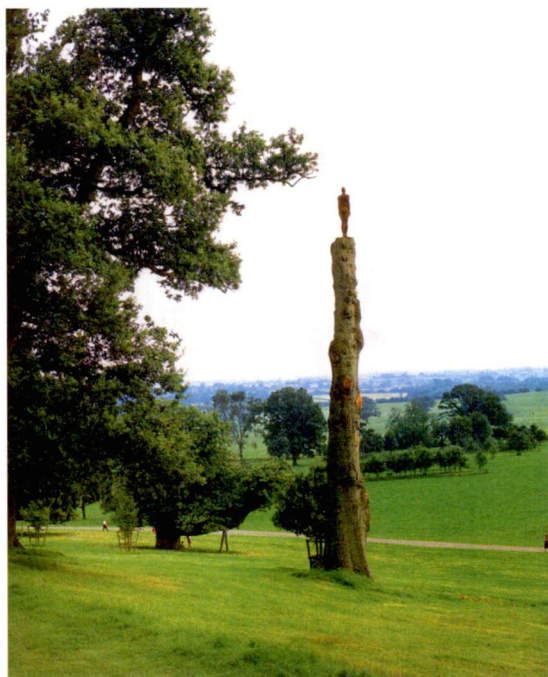


Fig. 6. Gormley, Antony. *Post*, 1993. Cast iron, 197x53x36cm, installation, Killerton Park, Exeter.

Gormley also uses life-sized figures in much of his work and many of his earlier pieces were moulded from his own body. During the creation of these works he was entombed within the body moulds for considerable periods of time. It was during this point of the

process that he employed the Vipassana technique, which he learnt in India. Gormley suggested; 'The best work comes from a complete moment, which is a realization' (Gormley. 1995: 20). The 'moment' to which Gormley refers is understood in the mould phase and then conveyed to the viewer through the finished piece. Many of Gormley's completed works like the one at Killerton Park (fig.6) are placed in a natural environment, where they calmly relate to and resonate with the nature of existence. According to Gormley; 'Each work is a place between form and formlessness' (Gormley. 1995: 118). Gormley's work aligns itself with Zen artistic principles because it has 'this formless self as a prime concern' (Hisamatsu. 1971: 19).

In an interview with Ernst Gombrich, author of *The Story of Art and Illusion*, Gormley pondered; 'How do you make something out there, material, separate from you, an object amongst other objects, somehow carry the feeling of being – for the viewer to somehow make a connection with it. In a way, where you ended in Art and Illusion is where I want to begin' (Gormley. 1995: 12). Gormley is seeking to place his work within the context of a historical and contemporary frame of reference. I believe this is not necessary if the artist's aim is to portray the timeless, the eternal and the formless.

Although I am influenced and inspired by Gormley's views and artworks our aims vary marginally in that I have no initial conceptual intent to influence the viewer of the art that I create. In most cases I am responding to a particular moment and recording those responses. Through the work I am also seeking to understand the relationship I have to my own inner and outer environment. The concession I make to the observer is that my intentions are compatible with ethical Buddhist practice, which includes creating a harmonious, contemplative setting. The viewers are responsible for their own reactions, and if they become motivated or seek to further understand themselves as a result of viewing the work, this is of their own predilection. After all, anything can affect or inspire us, and we can find 'spirituality everywhere' (Batchelor. 1999: 71).

Although there is a distinct relationship between Gormley's work and the principles outlined in Zen Buddhism, there is an aesthetic and philosophical difference between the art of Gormley and the artists who comfortably fit within the category of what may be termed contemporary Buddhist artists. Gormley, although inspired by Buddhist principles, prefers to approach his art-making and theoretical outlook from a non-religious standpoint, inspired by his Vipassana practice, which incorporates a non-sectarian perspective.

Conversely, the aim of the contemporary Buddhist artist is to update and re-shape Buddhist iconography and symbolism. They present their work in terms and images compatible with current-day issues and sensibilities.

These artists include Rudolph Stingel (fig.7) and Karma Phuntsok (fig.8). Though motivated by Buddhist doctrine and practice their work differs from traditional Buddhist art in that they are employing a personal judicious point of view. However, their use of conventional Buddhist imagery suggests their artwork may be viewed within the broad genre of time honoured orthodox Buddhist art, which has a heritage dating back thousands of years. (fig.9).



Fig. 7. Stingel, R. *Untitled*, 1994. Cast urethane rubber, 47x54.6x22.8cm.

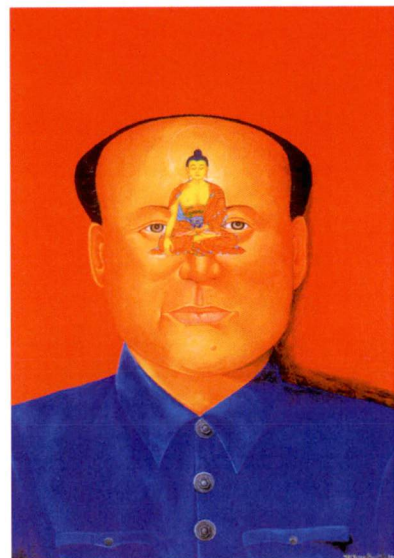


Fig. 8. Phunstok, K. *Mao*, 1995. Acrylic on canvas, 108.5x77.8.

Zen art is different from traditional Buddhist paintings and sculptures in that it depicts the actual world of trees, rivers, mountains, animals and humans (fig.10), and not the other worldly images of sacred Buddhas. This is because in Zen, 'the mind itself is Buddha, and outside of the mind there is no Buddha, the Buddha is nothing more than a human being who has attained awakening' (Hisamatsu. 1971: 18).

Traditional and contemporary Buddhist artists, Antony Gormley and Zen artists express various experiences, themes and beliefs through a diverse range of imagery and materials. Fundamental to their artistic processes are the contemplative methods they employ to explore their personal relationship with existence. Their distinctive, yet related practices motivate, pervade and inform their individual proclivities. I consider this approach is true

of many artists, including myself. It is within the broad context of what I call conventional and spiritual, or relative and absolute questioning that I place my own art.



Fig. 9. Buddha sheltered by Mucalinda, the Serpent king, Cambodia, early 12th century. Bronze, height, 58.4cm.



Fig. 10. Shuko, S. *Zen landscape*, c. 1470. Ink on paper, 45x25cm.

Buddhist artistic initiatives

Due to the unprecedented interest in Buddhist art and Buddhism in general in the West, there have been major exhibitions of both traditional and contemporary Buddhist art in Australia and other Western countries. In 2002 an exhibition titled, *Buddha – Radiant Awakening* was exhibited for four months at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. There were over one hundred and thirty historical and contemporary works of art exhibited, including the Cambodian bronzed Buddha (fig.9) and Karma Phunstok's work, which relates to the Buddhist concept that all sentient beings without exception possesses Buddha nature (fig.8). The Director of the Gallery, Edmund Capon wrote the forward in the catalogue for the exhibition:

Buddhism a faith of perpetual evolution and regeneration; one that has no borders, only horizons . . . Just as Buddhism has transcended time so has it transcended place. It is a faith that addresses all humankind, at all times and in all parts of the world. Buddhism, with Buddha the 'Enlightened One' at its very heart, is a vision, or rather a panorama of visions, which both fuels and fulfils our spiritual needs and imaginations . . . Infinity is like silence – something we recognize but cannot quite grasp. Buddhism entertains those

wondrous infinities . . . Buddhist thought and circumstance is well illustrated in both its spread throughout Asia, and now into the minds of the Western world (Menzies. 2002: 10).

In the United States during 2003-04 there were fifty-one historical and contemporary art exhibitions all exploring the relationship between Buddhism, art and contemporary Western society. In the New York metropolitan area, twenty institutions formed a collaboration titled, *The Buddhist Project*, which investigated 'the common ground between the creative mind, the perceiving mind, and the meditative mind' (Morgan: 2004). Rudolph Stingel's work (fig.7), which is symbolic of the link between the inspired mind and Buddhist thought, featured in one of the fifteen exhibitions created from the project.

Art critic, Anne Morgan wrote an article in the art magazine, *Sculpture* about *The Buddhist Project* and its various undertakings:

These exhibitions prove that Buddhist perspectives remain a vital and palpable influence in contemporary art practice. Recent works by Western and Eastern artists may reference traditional Buddhist art, yet they incorporate personal and contemporary cultural artefacts . . . Overall, contemporary works capture the essence of Buddhist thought rather than its dogma . . . Buddhism has become a convincing frame of reference to discuss the spiritual in art, partly due to the secularisation of Buddhist symbols and practices such as meditation. These threads will continue to inspire a multitude of fresh, creative approaches to art, far removed from the familiar and deadening practice of cynicism and defeat, stressing that all human beings seek one thing: happiness (Morgan. 2004).

The Australian exhibition, *Buddha – Radiant Awakening*, the American initiative, *The Buddhist Project*, and similar enterprises taking place around the world reflect the importance of Buddhist thought and art as a viable creative force in the East and the West.

In this chapter I have defined Zen practice in terms of its relationship with art, nature, experience and Buddhism. However, my informed considerations have led me to conclude that, from its fundamental perspective, Zen accommodates all phenomena while simultaneously transcending all formal definitions. I equate the paradoxical nature of Zen

with the paradoxical nature of existence. To grasp the essence of either I have adopted a creative approach incorporating contemplative practice. In the following chapters I will introduce the inventive processes I am employing in relationship to my exploration and understanding of interdependent existence.

CHAPTER 4: INTERBEING (THE SKETCHES)

A sketch can be something significant in itself or it may be a precursor to some other project. The work produced for the exhibition, *Interbeing (The Sketches)* belongs to both categories. In this chapter I will explore the various processes that brought these pieces of the preliminary visual research into being. The art created for this series also relates to and contributes directly to the final element of the investigation, the installation titled, *Mandala of the Mind*. I will explain the relevance of their relationship at the conclusion to this chapter. Each individual artwork created for the presentation, *Interbeing (The Sketches)* can be understood and reviewed in the light of their distinctive inquiries and overall connection through colour, texture, concept, mind and spirituality. However, the experiences, materials and processes that influenced their creation varied from piece to piece. This way of working afforded me flexibility and spontaneity in keeping with the open minded, empirical approach to this investigation.



Fig. 11. King, G. *Interbeing (The Sketches)*, 2004. Paper clay, 36x60x50cm.

I begin this visual presentation with a vehicle symbolic of my research journey (fig.11). The boat (my body) carries the consciousness of the meditator through the mind-stream of life. Along the way I observe my feelings, emotions, thoughts and sensations in relationship to the various experiences I encounter. As my being meets with other

travellers traversing the same mind-stream, I recognize them not as separate entities, but as diverse aspects of myself. They are energized by similar desires and created from the same elemental stuff of nature. The actuality that we all have experiences and share common emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, grief and joy points to the fact that experiences and emotions are part of the relative human condition and therefore a conventional truth. According to Doctor Paul Ekman, Professor of psychology at the University of California; 'Just as there are universals in what brings forth an emotion, there are also universals in some of the changes that occur within our body when we feel an emotion' (Dalai Lama. 2003: 128). A contemplation of these circumstances has helped me to interrelate with a degree of empathy.

Meditation assists me in understanding that all the mind creations I encounter are only as significant as I allow them to be. I am learning to observe my feelings, sensations and thoughts, not as powerful controlling forces capable of disparate distractions, but more as interdependent phenomena devoid of any autonomous substance and influence. Obviously, some emotions are deeply rooted, which can and do affect us in a myriad of ways. Nevertheless, a contemplation of the ultimate harmlessness of these forces can bring about various levels of calmness to the mind. According to Thich Nhat Hanh; 'When we are agitated, we just say, 'I am agitated,' and mindfulness is already there. Until we recognize agitation as agitation, it will push us around and we will not know what is going on or why' (Hanh. 1998: 74). From this perspective, I am learning to steer my small boat where I wish to take it, not where some dangerous mind currents dictate it should go.

Another vehicle, of sorts, is the piece I created which was influenced by ten years of wood-firing experience (fig.12). I describe this work as a time machine. The Anagama kiln originated in China over 1,000 years ago. The one we fired twice a year in Gippsland, Victoria was fuelled by 10-tons of scrap pine. Firings would often exceed four days and the temperature inside the firebox would usually climb beyond 1,300C. On a few occasions while sitting next to the Anagama I would imagine the energy being generated inside the seven meter-long kiln as powerful enough to propel me back through time to anywhere I wished to go. All I had to do was sit in the chair at the front of the kiln and steer it with my mind. The energy I refer to was made possible by the combination of the natural elements, fire, earth, water and air and the interaction and efforts of the many people directly and indirectly involved with the firing.

This means of transport has taken me back in time to places and cultures where I have been privileged to observe people who venerated nature and understood its significance to their lives. One place in particular I travelled to was Australia before European settlement. I witnessed the intimacy the native people shared with the natural world and I watched them express this through their Dreamtime images on the rock walls. I listened to them speaking about the sky father Ungud, ‘ . . . a formless, invisible, all-embracing power that is manifest in every plant, rock, animal and human’ (Eason. 1997: 2). I also observed their ceremonies and rituals where they celebrated their connection with the earth. My adventures may have only been flights of fantasy, but the fact remains, the Australian aborigines regarded the land as sacred and experienced it as ‘a living entity’. Many people and cultures shared these beliefs. The native North American Indians considered Mother earth to be the ‘source of all life’ and the Mayans believed nature was a live being that ‘continually renewed itself’ (Eason. 1997: 348).



Fig. 12. King, G. *Interbeing (The Sketches)*, 2004.
Paper clay, 77x44x15cm.

Joseph Campbell completed a twelve year study of the world's various mythologies, which he conveyed in a series of books titled, *The Masks of God*. Campbell concluded that the main finding of his extensive research was that it supported a thought he had long held, which was ‘the unity of the race of man, not only in its biology but also in its spiritual history, which has everywhere unfolded in the manner of a single symphony’ (Campbell.

1962: v). According to Campbell; 'The essence of oneself and the essence of the world: these two are one. The aim is not to see, but to realize that one is, that essence' (Campbell. 1973: 386).

Various contemporary scientists have been researching something similar to the ancient beliefs of interconnectedness. James Lovelock, while working for NASA, formulated 'Gaia Theory'. Put simply, his theory is that every organism on this planet, including the atmosphere, co-exist and co-evolve through a complex form of inter-activity that regulates and creates the prime conditions for the planet to survive. Kit Pedler examined Lovelock's theories in her book, *The Quest for Gaia*:

The physical structure of the earth organism, the body of the goddess, is a dynamic sun-driven network of interaction and control, composed of an uncountable number of stabilizing feedback loops, each of which interrelates with its neighbour. We humans were once an integral and functional part of this network, but have now separated ourselves from it in a way which is incompatible with our survival. Every organism, animal, fish and bird is a part of the organism, as are the rocks, the air, the ground and the oceans. The whole is held together by the flow of information, which maintains overall stability, which tends to create conditions optimal for the continuance of the life process (Pedler. 1979: 40-41).

These definitions would suggest that our planet is an 'intelligent entity with the power to take adaptive action' (Eason. 1997: 53). Gaia is named after the Greek Goddess who guided the living world out of chaos.

Ancient mythologies and Gaia Theory are two further examples of how humans have expressed their deep held belief in the interconnected nature of existence.

The sculpture incorporating the head, the house and the tree (fig.13) was created in response to a consideration of my time spent living and connecting with nature in Gippsland, Victoria. The personal experience of something and the conveyance of that knowledge are two different issues. Although related, one approach may be described as intuitive or direct understanding and the other as logical and analytical. Both ways carry their own truths yet co-exist comfortably when incorporated with awareness and a whole

mind or holistic approach. For myself, the logical and the analytical are understood as the technical approach and the understanding of the clay and ceramic processes. The intuitive relates to my experiences of living and interacting with nature and the direct creative expression of this union. Hisamatsu, said this intuitive way of working ‘grasps truth at once, and then expresses it directly and immediately’ (Hisamatsu. 1971: 21).



Fig.13. King, G. *Interbeing (The Sketches)*, 2004. Paper clay, 64x33x28cm.

While living in Tasmania I have had several adventures related to my exploration of, and communion with its natural environment. The following experiences are intrinsic to the research methods I have employed to acquire information in connection to my relationship with all phenomena. In the hills of Fingal I explored a cave where various objects were discovered that had belonged to the people who lived there during the depression of the 1930's. While sitting at the entrance to the cave, I watched kangaroos in the valley below bound across a 1,000-acre sheep farm. Deep in the bush-land at Liffey I participated in a Tibetan Buddhist ceremony that celebrated and paid respect to the natural environment. During my first winter in Tasmania I ventured to the top of a snow covered Mount

Wellington with a Tibetan Lama who revelled and frolicked in the freezing conditions. On the east coast of Tasmania I was introduced to an ancient aboriginal campsite. From there I watched a pod of dolphins pierce the water and the afternoon sky. At a place called Elephant Pass I observed black crows on the white snow and white stars in the black space. One summer's day I walked beside a river with a Korean Zen monk who talked to me about the energies inherent to the natural world. With other University of Tasmania students and staff I trekked for five hours with full backpack into the Walls of Jerusalem National Park where we camped overnight in the pristine wilderness. On one occasion I slept on the beach in a suburb of Hobart. In the background the Derwent river drummed a constant beat onto the sandy coastline. At another time in the city of Hobart I stood with a Vedic Priestess and observed a thunderstorm develop over and around the surrounding mountains.



Fig. 14. King, G. *Interbeing (The Sketches)*, 2004. Paper clay, recycled steel, wood, 150x160x50cm.



Fig. 15. King, G. *Interbeing (The Sketches)*, 2004. Wood, ceramic, 80x100x37cm.

These and other experiences influenced the bicycle and chair sculptures. Included in the nature inspired and creative processes was a contemplation of my reliance on the natural world. The bike (fig.14) is a symbol of the interdependent relationship I share with nature.

The work comprised of the chairs and the ceramic figure (fig.15), is also a reference to the interdependent nature of phenomena. This piece derived from an experience at a place named Elephant Pass, where I came across my shadow on a giant grey-gum. The circumstances at that point in time were such that I became transfixed in the exquisite nexus created by myself, the tree, and the shadow. Psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas named these occurrences 'aesthetic moments'. According to him; 'The aesthetic moment involves a subjective rapport in which the subject feels held in symmetry and solitude by

the spirit of the object. These are fundamentally wordless occasions' (Bollas. 1987: 16). Mark Epstein, is a psychiatrist and the author of numerous books on human cognitive reasoning. In response to Bollas's findings Epstein said:

What Bollas implies, but does not formulate explicitly, is that subject and object lose their entitateness under the spell of such moments. Some might call it a loss of boundaries, but, alternatively, we might see such times as the opening of a window into the fabric of mind that underlies our usual worlds of self and other (Bass. 2004: 32).

From an artist's perspective Marcel Duchamp referred to these moments as an 'aesthetic echo'. He considered that when one is touched by this revelation they become 'receptive and humble' (Clearwater. 1991: 107). My experiences of these 'aesthetic moments', concurs with the findings of Bollas, Epstein and Duchamp. These brief periods of significance are incorporated into my practice as they create further opportunities for insight into the nature of existence. When I contemplate my relationship to the world, which has been informed by experiences like the one at Elephant Pass I see in the completed work (fig.15) the trees, the rain, the clouds, the sun, the stars, myself, everything.

The found objects incorporated into the *Interbeing* series also allude to the conceptual work of Marcel Duchamp. He was at the forefront of shifting the focus from the completed artefact to the artistic process and moving the responsibility of the process to the 'perceiver' (Bass. 2004: 20). According to Duchamp, a work of art has two aspects; 'In the creative act, the artist goes from intention to realization' (Peterson. 1989: 139). However, the participation and realizations of the spectator are necessary to complete the process. Duchamp called this a 'phenomenon of transmutation: an act of transubstantiation in which inert matter is experienced as a work of art' (Peterson. 1989: 140). Bass said; 'Duchamp helped us to see that everything in the world is worthy of our attention and to understand that this – our attention – is the creative act' (Bass. 2004: 20). Duchamp's viewer-response theory is in line with my considerations. As an artist my connection with the viewer is determined by the motivational intent I impute through the work. How the viewer chooses to understand the art I create, is of their own volition. It is the nature of the conditioned mind to assign an object with its own discernment. According to Hanh; 'We are what we

perceive . . . Perceptions often tell us as much about the perceiver as the object of perception' (Hanh. 1998: 135).

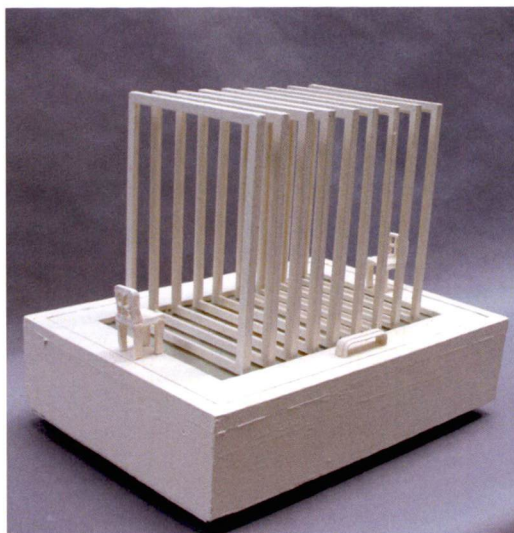


Fig. 16. King, G. *Interbeing (The Sketches)*, 2004. Wood, ceramic, glass, 48x53x37cm.



Fig. 17. Van Gogh, Vincent. *The chair and the pipe*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 91.8x73cm

The bridge (fig.16) is symbolic of the links that connect many aspects of this inquiry. In the introduction to the exegesis I wrote about a visit to the National Gallery of Victoria to see a selection of Vincent van Gogh's paintings. While viewing the exhibition I came across the work titled, *The Chair and the Pipe* (fig.17). I stood there looking at the painting for what seemed like ages. I felt like I was being absorbed into the art work and absorbing it into my being at the same time. Through Van Gogh and his chair I caught a glimpse of myself and the potential for further self-understanding. His love for and affinity with the natural world, his spiritual questioning and evolution, and his need to express these concerns were and are an inspiration to myself. The bridge with frames and chairs is a symbol of the mind that is questioning reality and seeking to understand its relevance to the universe. The chairs employed in this piece and other works are also symbolic of the Buddhist teaching on emptiness. I see Buddhism, nature, science, experience and art as bridges to understanding as well as frames of reference. All these elements are synthesized as images within my mind, which have manifested into the visual outcomes of this investigation.

Relevant to my exploration of the nature of existence has been an investigation into the negative characteristics within my mind. These traits include the angers, wrong views, anxieties, destructive emotions and negative habit energies, which affect my mind and therefore the relationship I share with all else. The rocks inside the bird-cage (fig.18) are

symbolic of these obscurations. Essentially, Buddhist practice is about taming and understanding the mind and transforming negative mental afflictions and bad habits into positive outcomes. Buddhism teaches a vast range of practical techniques designed to help the individual deal with these problems. The benefit of meditation and a few other mind trainings have been previously considered. One approach that has been of assistance to me from the start of my practice is a technique called 'Changing the peg' (Hanh. 1998: 62). Put simply the procedure entails consciously replacing unwholesome negative thinking with positive wholesome thoughts. This exercise helps to alleviate the mind from prolonged negativity. Another method called 'Shifting perspective' (Dalai Lama. 1998: 172) assists me to understand difficult situations from various viewpoints. This approach takes the focus away from a potential narrow personal point of view, which often leads to a self-absorption that can increase the intensity of the problem. Yet another positive process I have learnt from Buddhism is to 'concentrate on removing the arrow, not on who fired it'. Employing this method assists in bringing the attention of the mind back to relative, current, personal issues instead of wasting time and energy wallowing in past discrepancies initiated by others or myself.

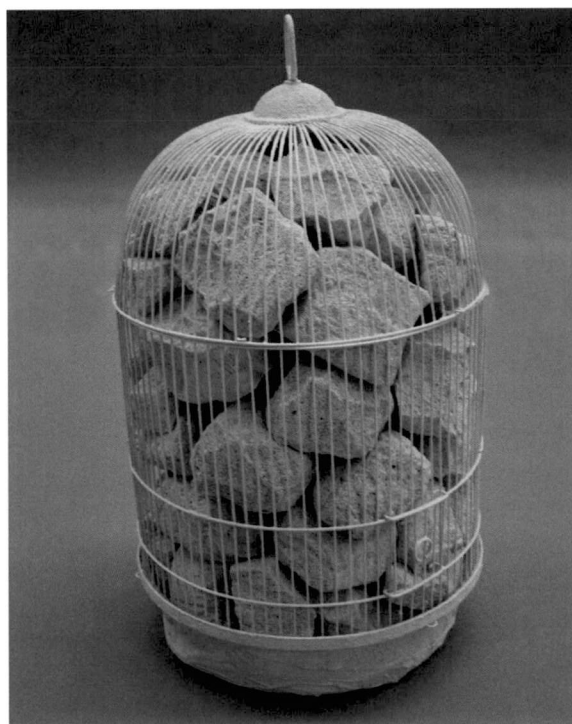


Fig. 18. King, G. *Interbeing (The Sketches)*, 2004.
Steel, cement, paint, sand, 60x33x33cm.

The Dalai Lama said; ‘No matter what activity or practice we are pursuing, there isn’t anything that isn’t made easier through constant familiarity and training. Through training, we can change, we can transform ourselves’ (Dalai Lama. 1998: 43). Scientific research supports the Dalai Lama’s claim that systematic positive mind training can change ingrained negative mental states. According to Cutler; ‘ . . . our brains are malleable, ever changing, reconfiguring their wiring according to new thoughts and experiences . . . Scientists call the brains inherent capacity to change plasticity’ (Dalai Lama. 1998: 45). Doctors at the National Institute of Mental Health in America conducted an experiment that indicated the following; after the repetition of a particular task over a four-week period, the brain of the subject tested had recruited new nerve cells and created neural pathways different from the ones that were there before the experiment. This exceptional feature of the brain is the physiological rationale that supports the possibility for mind transformation. Cutler said; ‘By mobilizing our thoughts and practicing new ways of thinking, we can reshape our nerve cells and change the way our brains work’ (Dalai Lama. 1998: 45-46). These conclusions further highlight the methods I am applying to break down the blockages that inhibit my insight into the nature of the unobstructed, interrelated mind.

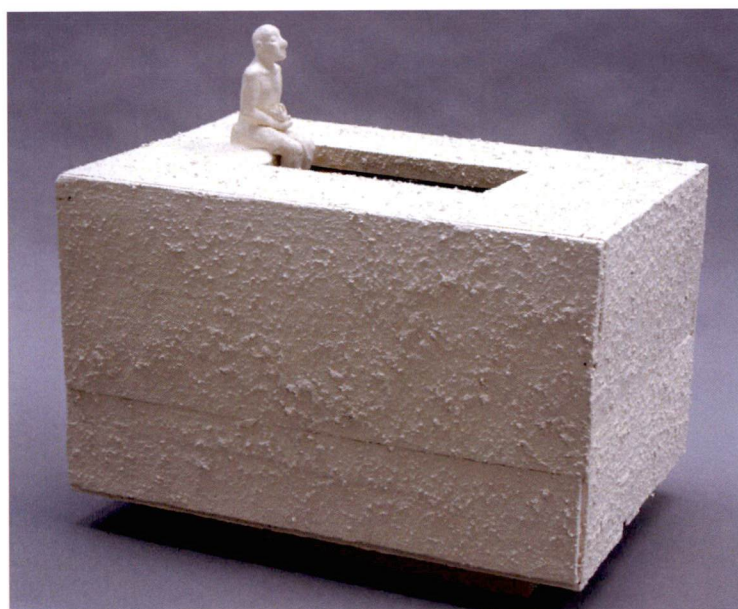


Fig. 19. King, G. *Interbeing (The Sketches)*, 2004. Recycled wood, paint, sand, ceramic, newspapers, 42x45x30cm.

Looking at the stars always makes me dream, as simply as I dream over the black dots representing towns and villages on a map. Why, I ask myself, shouldn't the shining dots of the sky be just as accessible as the black dots on

the map of France? Just as we take the train to get to Tarascon or Rouen, we take death to reach a star. (*Vincent van Gogh*, Allen. 1993: 27).

For a long time, I struggled with how to visually express the experience I sometimes have when standing beneath the stars and gazing into their infinite beauty. I developed various concepts and forms, which seemed at the time to satisfy my creative expression, however, inevitably, each attempt was re-worked and then ultimately dispatched to the dump-master at the rear of the Academy of the Arts. Eventually I gave up on the idea and instead, I started and completed a work that expresses the conventional relationship I share with the universe (fig.19). The figure, the box (representing the world) and the multitude of words and concepts within the box all represent disparate elements of existence co-joined on a journey throughout space and time. After completing this piece I felt as if I had finished the series.

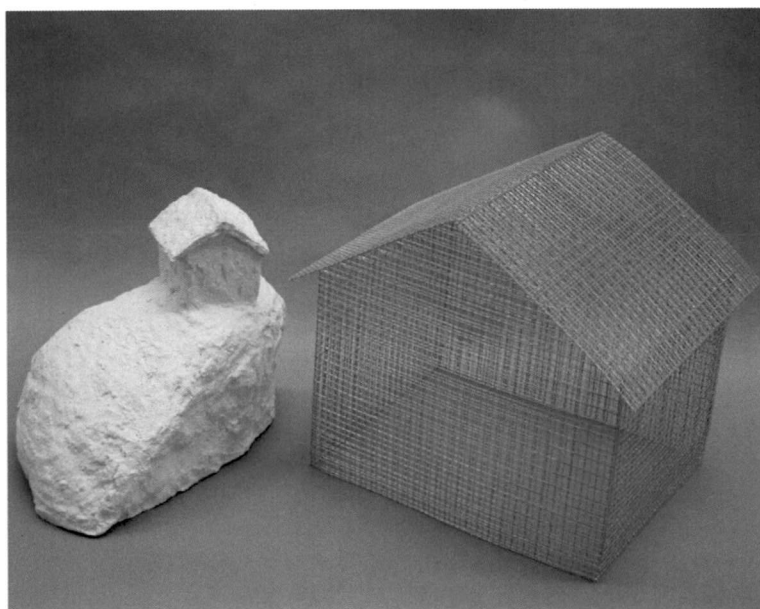


Fig. 20. King, G. *Interbeing (The Sketches)*, 2004. Paper clay over red raku clay, wire, 35x65x54cm.

A few days after I thought I had ended this phase of the studio work, I went for a walk through the Cataract Gorge in Launceston. On one of the walking tracks I came across an unusually shaped rock. The rock became the catalyst for what was to become the last piece in the series, which related back to the work I had struggled with and not completed. When I picked up the rock at the gorge and clenched it in the palm of my hand, a thought came to mind. I had been looking outside myself for an answer on how to express my experiences with the stars, when all along the answer was with me, in me, part of me. Unlike Van Gogh, I do not believe we have to die to reach a star. I consider that what

stands there staring into the universe is the universe itself. I catch a glimpse of the oneness when I engage with the stars (fig.20). The ceramic home and rock the house sits on and the separate, yet related wire construct represent the interrelationship between the earth, the universe and my mind.

The wire house created for the final piece (fig.20) in the *Interbeing* series became the symbolic nexus that linked all the elements of the research. As this work was primarily representative of my mind in relationship to all phenomena I decided to incorporate a wire house made of steel into the artwork that will conclude the visual research, an installation titled, *Mandala of the Mind*.

CHAPTER 5: MANDALA OF THE MIND

In the Introduction to this exegesis I described a visit to the National Gallery of Victoria where I observed Tibetan monks constructing a coloured sand mandala. In this chapter I explore the mandala and examine its relevance to the final artwork created for this inquiry, the installation, *Mandala of the mind*.



Fig. 21. Tibetan sand mandala, 1996. 170x170cm. Created by the Monks from Depung Loseling Monastery at the Newport Performing Arts Centre, Oregon, USA.

The Tibetan sand mandala (fig.21) is representative of all the aspects relative to the conventional and spiritual journey, including the relationship of one's own mind to the universe. In general, the sand mandala is constructed from millions of grains of coloured sand laid out in a geometric pattern, which conveys traditional Tibetan Buddhist symbology. The sand mandala is believed to invoke spiritual energies capable of healing and purifying the environment as well as all those who participate in, or witness the construction and ultimate dismantling of the mandala. The disbanding of the intricate work is symbolic of the impermanent nature of conditioned existence. After the work is swept up, some of the blessed sand used in the creation of the mandala is distributed to the audience and the rest is, in most cases where possible taken to a near-by body of water

where it is thrown in so that it can symbolically carry the healing blessing of peace and unity to the world.

The monks who create the mandalas consider it to be sacred art, which is understood as a precise integrated system of symbols that have been developed over millennia through empirical wisdom and meditative insights. The sand mandala is envisaged as a two-dimensional floor plan, or cosmogram of a three-dimensional palace, which is representative of the inner world of the psyche and the projected outer universe. The palace is understood as a real entity and explored through the mind during the mandala construction. The process is considered an exercise in meditation, assisting the creator of the mandala to understand their own mind and its absolute nature.

The Tibetan sand mandala and related ceremonies are derived from the Tibetan Tantric tradition. Tibetan Tantra is a complex mind training process, incorporating visualization techniques aimed at awakening the individual who practises to higher states of consciousness. Other basic Tantric practices include reciting mantras (sacred words) and performing mudras (ritualistic symbolic hand gestures).

I have witnessed and participated in a number of ceremonies and rituals presided over by various Tibetan Lamas and Rinpoches. The formal procedures I have been associated with involve many of the various symbols connected with Tibetan Buddhism, which all carry their own meaning and significance. Radmila Moacanin received her PhD in psychology. She studied Zen and is also a student of Tibetan Buddhism. Moacanin's observations of and responses to a Tibetan ceremony are in line with my experiences. There is the sound of the drums and cymbals, the conch-shells, the bells and the Lama's rhythmic melodic throat chanting. The smell of the fragrant incense, floating through the air. The colourful prayer flags and robes worn by the Lamas. On the walls of the temple hang the Thangkas (religious paintings of sacred images) depicting the numerous deities associated with Tibetan Buddhism. The spiritually charged atmosphere created within these ceremonies is designed to assist the participants to meditate at a deep level. According to Moacanin, a typical ceremony, 'has all the dramatic qualities of incantation and magic; it is a feast for all the senses and it strikes at the deepest levels of one's being . . . it is a spectacle and experience that cannot be described, but neither can it ever be forgotten' (Moacanin. 1986: 55-56). Being involved with Tibetan Buddhism has assisted me to comprehend the

importance of symbology as a means of understanding and expressing the interplay that exists between my spirituality and creativity.

In previous chapters I described a variety of experiences I encountered while living in an A-frame house surrounded by the Australian bush. I will now compare aspects of those experiences with related elements of the Tibetan sand mandala and other pertinent associated issues including Jung's collective unconscious, symbolism and Zen. This comparative analysis will explain and place into context my mandala creation.

Carl Gustav Jung, the eminent Swiss psychologist and psychoanalyst formulated the theory of the collective unconscious through his own empirical conclusions and scientific results. Jung determined that life had a spiritual plan and objective, and that all of humanity is united and connected by a common, higher level of understanding and purpose called the 'collective unconscious', which exists within the mind simultaneously with the basic ego consciousness. Jung considered that a failure to comprehend and reconcile these different states of consciousness could create a fragmentation of the psyche leading to various problems within the mind. Archetypes are the contents of the collective unconscious, primordial images that have been expressed in various ways by mankind through symbols and mythologies giving form to our varied, inner experiences. The mandala is one of the many archetypal images that has been explored and utilized throughout human history.

According to Moacanin the mandala is an image that resides within the depths of the human psyche, 'which spontaneously emerges and assumes many different forms. It usually takes shape in times of disorganization and inner chaos, and is nature's way of restoring balance and order' (Moacanin. 1986: 27). The Navaho Indians used mandala sand paintings as a means of restoring lost inner balance bringing sick people back into 'harmony with the cosmos' (Jung. 1964: 230). Jung observed that in the drawings and paintings of his schizophrenic patients 'mandala symbols appear very frequently in moments of psychic disorientation as compensatory ordering factors' (Jung. 1960: 270).

According to Bailey Cunningham, author of *Mandala – Journey to the Centre* and founder of the *Mandala Project*; 'There are as many ways to create a mandala as there are individuals . . . yet in essence the mandalas are all the same – all radiate from a central, infinite point' (Cunningham. 2002: 108). British artist Andy Goldsworthy creates earth mandalas by working with the organic materials he discovers in the natural environment

(fig.22). I relate to Goldsworthy's affinity with the natural world and the importance he places on a direct and intimate rapport with the earth. His collaborations with the environment assist him to explore his own relationship with existence. Goldsworthy said; 'Nature is in a state of change and that change is the key to understanding. Each work grows, stays, decays. Process and decay are implicit. Transience in my work reflects what I find in nature' (Goldsworthy: 2005).

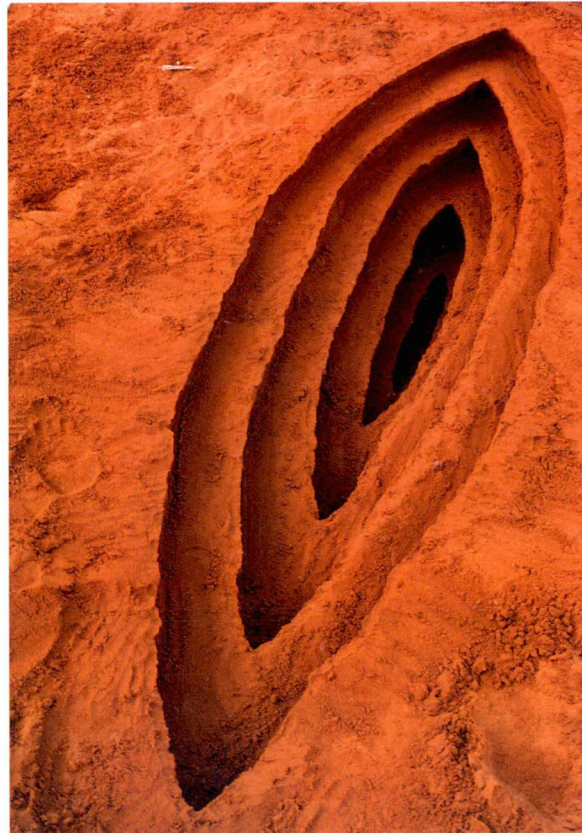


Fig. 22. Goldsworthy, A. *Hard sand carved out with a stick*, 1991. Mount Victor, South Australia.

Brigitte Spillmann-Jenny, president of the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich wrote the forward for the book, *Mandala – Journey to the Centre*. According to her; 'Mandalas are witnesses of a journey into the centre of the macrocosm of the universe, as well as into the microcosm of the human physical and spiritual organism' (Cunningham. 2002: 6).

Goldsworthy confirmed this viewpoint when, in relationship to his Mount Victor work he said; 'This place will always be important to me. It is difficult to define the light, the colours. I cannot describe the effect that red has on me. It is as deeply moving spiritually as red maples in Japan or the spring green grass in Britain' (Goldsworthy. 1996: 15).

Goldsworthy and his natural creations inspire me, and in time I would like to work directly in and with nature as he does. In the next chapter I will consider the future direction of my art practice.

The mandala is a symbol of the total self, the ordered mind reconciling opposites creating a union with the universe. The symbolic unity of the mandala is common to all humanity, whether it is employed by primitive man, Tibetan monks, psychiatric patients, artists or anyone else. The research I have undertaken in Tasmania has assisted me to understand that for me living in the middle of the bush in Gippsland was like being part of an integrated multi-dimensional organic mandala.



Fig. 23. A-Frame mud brick house on five-acre block, Gippsland, Victoria, June, 2000.

The A-frame house where I lived, made art and studied and practised Buddhism was the centre of the mandala. Within and around me in every direction were the multitude of contributing elements, which made up the living mandala (fig.23). I contemplate nature in a similar way to how the monks engage with the symbols in their mandalas. According to Moacanin, the Tibetans use powerful symbology to ‘express the inexpressible and to evoke certain experiences that transport the individual to higher levels of consciousness’ (Moacanin. 1986: 89). The sounds, smells and natural images inherent in the bush surrounds were and are to me compelling emblems capable of stimulating insight into my own relationship with existence.

The wire structure I will create for the concluding installation, *Mandala of the Mind* (fig.24) will be a symbolic projection of the influences and inner experiences inspired by

living and communing with nature in Gippsland and Tasmania. The house will sit in the centre of the mandala signifying the innermost still-point of the mind where the self integrates and emerges in harmony with all else. The wire house will be made of steel expressing the strength of mind required to pursue the ultimate goal of total enlightenment. It will also be transparent indicating emptiness (formlessness) and the clear light nature of the pure mind unobstructed by hindrances and discursive thought. The house will be raised above the ground alluding to the heightened states of consciousness and awareness one aims to achieve through the meditative process. In reference to the absolute nature of existence, the small squares within and intrinsic to the larger squared structure indicate the concept; the all can be seen in the one and the one can be seen in the all. Amir Kabir, a 15th century philosopher and poet said; ‘All know that the drop merges into the ocean, but few know the ocean merges into the drop’ (Cunningham. 2002: 130).

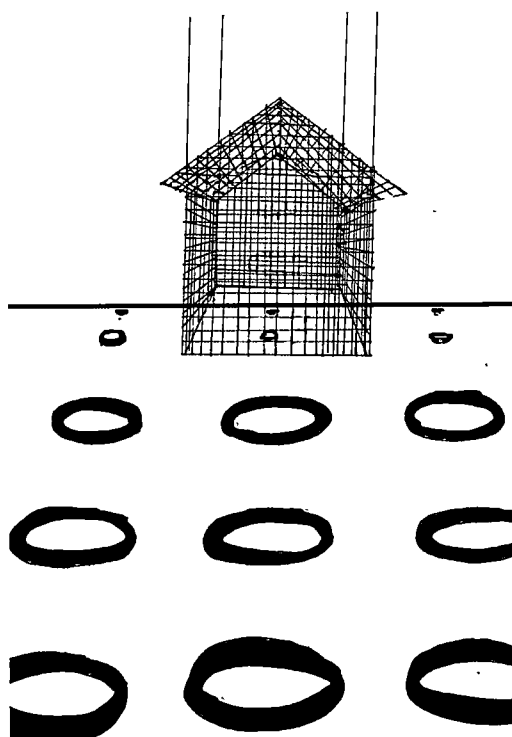


Fig. 24. King, G. Ink sketch for the Installation, *Mandala of the Mind*, 19x17cm, 2004.

Creating the mandala within the quiet confines of a gallery space will be my way of visually transposing and expressing the sacred and secular dimensions within my own experiences. A gallery, when I am there alone, is analogous of the still spaces I have experienced when being with nature, creating art or sitting quietly in meditation. The tranquil ambiance of an empty gallery is at times a contemplative atmosphere and a welcome sanctuary in contrast to the various distractions happening throughout other areas of my environment.

Mandala of the Mind is influenced by many aspects related to the Tibetan model, including its geometric design, organic element and in particular the psychological approach. However, in terms of aesthetics my creation will differ substantially. In contrast to the colourful imagery and multitude of symbols utilized by the Tibetans, I will employ an austere approach in line with my preferred aesthetic, which is influenced by the natural simplicity associated with the art of Zen. For this reason I intend to make use of the Enso (Zen circle), a symbol borrowed from Zen iconography (fig.25). The Enso, like the mandala, is representative of all the aspects of one's mind brought together in harmony. It represents the undivided nature of reality and the infinite.



Fig. 25. Omori Sogen Roshi. (1904-1994), *Enso*; *Zen circle*, 65x65cm, Kyoto, Japan.

The central element of my mandala, the wire house, will incorporate within its boundaries a circle (the Enso), signifying the various practices I have employed, which have the potential to transform the conditioned mind into the enlightened mind. Surrounding the house and the inner circle will be a multitude of Ensos representing the senses and all the experiences my mind encounters. I consider all life occurrences positive and negative, to be opportunities for insightful reflection on the relationship I share with all else. All the Ensos will be made from organic material (top-soil) indicating the direct inspiration and influence nature has provided to myself and this inquiry.

Although my creation will be arbitrary in nature compared to Tantra's established practices and regardless of the fact my mandala differs in physical appearance to the Tibetan model,

the fundamental positive intent and motivation is still intrinsic in my work. Therefore in a similar vein to the Tibetan mandala, I consider *Mandala of the mind* to be an interactive work of art. The symbology within my mandala is significant to myself because of the personal conventional and spiritual references and aspirations. However, anyone else engaging with the mandala will be entering his or her own mind on the relative level because they will interpret what they see through their own sensibilities, conditioning and discriminating mind. Nevertheless, as far as I am concerned the viewers of my installation will also be symbolically approaching and interacting with their own universal minds. The contemplative nature of the work will incorporate an atmosphere conducive to individual reflection. In the next chapter I will introduce a series of works (also titled, *Mandala of the Mind*), which have assisted me to understand the formal aspects relevant to the construction and installation of the mandala I will present in June, 2006.

Jung described humankind's ultimate purpose as striving toward the 'God within us' (Jung. 1972: 67). As part of this journey and process, humans have the opportunity to consciously work towards harmonizing the minds conscious and unconscious contents. According to Jung, if we make it a mindful task to understand and integrate the psyche, the personality will be 'permeated with light' and consciousness will be expanded and enriched. If we remain unconscious to the processes that exist within us 'the end remains as dark as the beginning' (Jung. 1969: 468). Put another way, to make a fundamental change in the way phenomena is perceived by working with the mundane and infusing it with wisdom, one can create the 'opportunity for enlightenment' (Moacanin. 1986: 83).

Why is it important to uncover one's true self, Buddha nature or whatever name you would like to use? According to Jung, the more we discover and understand who we really are in relationship to everything else in the universe 'the less contaminated with projections are our relations with the world, and the more open we are to enter into communication, yes, even communion with it' (Moacanin. 1986: 99). Humankind needs to create a positive unification based on the principle of 'Caritas', the Christian love for one's neighbour. Jung cautioned us; 'Where love stops, power begins, and violence, and terror' (Jung. 1959: 117-118).

Little did I know all those years ago when I stood there watching the monks at the National Gallery of Victoria constructing their sand mandala, that a seed was being planted deep in the fertile soil of my sub-conscious. Subsequently, through the years the seed would slowly

grow assisting me to understand some of the realities and potentialities deep within my own mind. Realities and potentialities symbolically manifest in *Mandala of the mind*.

CHAPTER 6: BRINGING THE MIND HOME

Following is the course timetable and the basic rules and regulations I was required to follow and abide by when I attended a ten-day Vipassana meditation retreat over the Christmas – New Year, period, 2004-05.

Course Timetable;

4:00 a.m.	Morning wake-up bell
4:30-6:30 a.m.	Meditate in the hall or your own room
6:30-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast break
8:00-9:00 a.m.	GROUP MEDITATION IN THE HALL
9:00-11:00 a.m.	Meditate in the hall or your own room
11:00-12:00 noon.	Lunch break
12:00 noon-1:00 p.m.	Rest and interviews with the teacher
1:00-2:30 p.m.	Meditate in the hall or your own room
2:30-3:30 p.m.	GROUP MEDITATION IN THE HALL
3:30-5:00 p.m.	Meditate in the hall or your own room
5:00-6:00 p.m.	Tea break
6:00-7:00 p.m.	GROUP MEDITATION IN THE HALL
7:00-8:15 p.m.	Teacher's Discourse in the hall
8:15-9:00 p.m.	GROUP MEDITATION IN THE HALL
9:00-9:30 p.m.	Question time in the hall
9:30 p.m.	Retire to your own room – Lights out

Meditation and self-discipline:

The process of self-purification by introspection is certainly never easy, students have to work very hard at it. By their own efforts they arrive at their own realizations, no one else can do this for them.

The code of discipline:

The foundation of the practice is Sila (Pali): moral conduct. Sila provides a basis for the development of Samadhi: concentration of mind; and purification of the mind is achieved through Panna: the wisdom of insight.

The precepts:

All who attend a Vipassana course must conscientiously undertake the following five precepts for the duration of the course:

- to abstain from killing any living creature;
- to abstain from stealing;
- to abstain from all sexual activity;
- to abstain from telling lies; and
- to abstain from all intoxicants.

Noble silence:

All students must observe ‘Noble silence’ from the beginning of the course until the morning of the last full day. A student may talk to the teacher during the day at designated times.

Food:

It is not possible to satisfy the special food preferences and requirements of all the meditators. Students are therefore kindly requested to make do with the simple vegetarian meals provided (Goenka, 2004).

For a long time I had been interested in this particular type of meditation. I heard varying stories of its impact on those who had attended courses in Australia. Accounts varied between exhilaration upon completion of the ten-day retreat, to looking for escape routes after being there for only a few hours. The course contained all the elements relevant to this inquiry, including the fundamental Buddhist principles underlying the practice, the nature element (all Vipassana centres are situated in isolated bushland) and a direct experiential approach. Another related issue was the Gormley connection. He learnt the technique from a Vipassana master in India. In addition I wanted to extend my understanding of other meditation techniques relevant to the one I was practising before

attending the course. Tranquil wisdom and Vipassana meditation are closely related. Furthermore I considered that taking the course would be an ideal way of preparing myself for future longer retreats in Australia and overseas.

Vipassana is non-sectarian, it does not align itself with any organized religion. The focal point of the practice is on personal experiential understanding in contrast to worship, devotion, philosophical discussion or intellectual debate.

For the first three days of the course we were taught a mind and breathing technique that focused specifically on one aspect of the body. This acute concentration has the capacity to bring to the surface level of the mind any deeply buried, sub-conscious affectations. We were assured any such thoughts, disturbing or pleasurable that came into the consciousness, would dissipate and lose their power if we did not engage with them. It was further clarified at one evening discourse that when we react to any situation by either grasping for something we want or responding with aversion to what we do not like we are actually adding fuel to the fires of our addictions. By not reacting, through just observing things as they are, staying with the breathe, being in the present moment, we allow the gross material of the sub-conscious to come to the surface and disappear. By not adding fuel to a fire it will eventually burn itself out.

After three days of the initial, intense focussing method designed to eventually quieten down and concentrate the mind, we began the actual Vipassana practice. Vipassana is a Pali word meaning 'to see things as they really are'. Put simply, Vipassana meditation is practiced to facilitate mental purification, which clears the way for gaining insight into the underlying nature of existence. People in the past who studied what happened within their being when an intense sensation arose, discovered that two things occurred. One reaction is that the breath loses its normal rhythm; in addition, a subtler change manifests within the body, which is related to the mental reaction. They discovered 'in these two ways mind and matter interconnect' (Goenka. 2001: 3). Through training, one can learn to observe one's own respiration and body sensations and remain balanced through the most provoking external situations. Consistent Vipassana practice has the potential to eradicate many psychosomatic diseases. It also has the capacity to eliminate the causes of unhappiness shared by all humans including ignorance, craving and aversion. The technique is being taught in prisons around the world and governments that implement the

practice are ‘discovering that this method is something scientific and non-sectarian’ (Goenka. 2004: 1).

In contrast to the one-pointed concentration of the preliminary exercise, the actual Vipassana practice involved a survey of the total self. As with the preparatory procedure, we were informed that if we observed all the sensations encountered within the framework of the mind/body structure without reacting, whatever we came across would eventually fall away. Everything in the universe, including us, are subject to the same laws of nature, the laws of cause and effect and the laws of ‘Anicca’ (Pali for impermanence). According to Gormley, learning Vipassana with Goenka in India taught him ‘discipline’ and ‘concentration’, which enabled him to explore his being in a ‘very systematic manner’ (Gormley. 1995: 12). At times during meditation sessions I literally felt like an astronaut exploring the universe (the universe within myself). Sensations certainly did arise and pass away, all manner of sensations. It began to be easy to let go of and just observe the negative impressions. The trap was not to become attached to the pleasant feelings. It was explained that the experiences of joy and bliss were still mundane states subject to the same laws of nature. Therefore an equanimous approach is just as important toward these experiences as for the less pleasant and neutral sensations. According to Erich Fromm, a former lecturer of psychology at Yale university and co-author of the book, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*; ‘Well-being is the state of having arrived at the full development of reason; reason not in the sense of a merely intellectual judgement, but in that of grasping truth by “letting things be” (to use Heidegger’s term) as they are’ (Fromm. 1974: 91).

When the mind becomes calm and more sensitive through the meditative process, creating a heightened sense of perception, specific states of being and subtler understandings of the relationship we share with the world may develop. On day eight I found myself sitting alone amongst the trees, feeling calm and relaxed. I decided that this was a good opportunity to meditate outdoors. After about ten minutes of applying the scanning technique we had been introduced to, I experienced a unique sensation. I literally had nothing to scan, in my mind I had disappeared. I was not startled or engrossed. I followed the instructions and just observed this state of nothingness. I learnt later that this was a *Jhana* (meditation stage). For me, the occurrence of dissolving into the natural surroundings defined the whole experience of the retreat. I had for a period of time transcended the dualistic perspective ingrained in my discriminating mind. According to Gormley; ‘. . . the distance inherent in sight has made us treat the “outside” as different’

(Gormley. 1995: 124). In relationship to his own Vipassana practice and in concurrence with my experiential findings, Gormley said:

I believe that whatever there is beyond is connected with what is here, and you can have a sense of dispersion of self when you sit for a while doing nothing but just being conscious of the body and feeling that attachment to body and self, me and mine disintegrate and you are able to experience energy rather than objects; that is freedom (Gormley. 1995: 135).

According to Fromm; ‘Well-being means to be fully related to man and nature affectively, to overcome separateness and alienation, to arrive at the experience of oneness with all that exists – and yet to experience *myself* at the same time as the separate entity I am, as the individual’ (Fromm. 1974: 91).

At one evening discourse the comparisons between the Buddha's findings and the revelations of contemporary physics were introduced (I did an evaluation of the parallels between them in Chapter Two). We were informed that subatomic particles are constantly arising and passing away, creating a continuous flow of vibrations. Our whole being, like all matter in the universe, is literally changing every second. Physical phenomena exist only in their dynamic interactions and relationships with other phenomena. These claims have been substantiated scientifically through the experiments carried out by scientists working in the field of Quantum mechanics. In 1960, Donald Glaser won the *Nobel Prize* in physics for his invention of the Hydrogen bubble chamber, which enabled physicists to track and identify the nature of subatomic particles. According to Capra; ‘Atoms consist of particles and these particles are not made of any material stuff . . . Mass is nothing but a form of energy’ (Capra. 1999: 202-203). Vipassana Master, S.N. Goenka said; ‘In reality there is no solidity in the material world . . . The only way to break the illusion is to learn to explore within oneself, and to experience the reality of one's own physical and mental structure’ (Goenka, 2001, p.13). All phenomena in the universe are different manifestations of the same ultimate reality, ‘the constituents of matter and the basic phenomena involving them are all interconnected, interrelated and interdependent’ (Capra. 1999: 131).

Attending the Vipassana retreat assisted me in confirming and further understanding many aspects in relationship to my own mind/body – environmental relationship. However, I consider an on-going dedicated practice is necessary for sustained, positive, insightful

results. For this reason I have incorporated the Vipassana meditative practice into my daily routine.

Montien Boonma

Before his death in the year 2000 Montien Boonma was Thailand's eminent contemporary artist. Throughout his life he created artworks, which were influenced by his Buddhist beliefs and Vipassana meditation practice.

Apinan Poshyananda is professor and director of art at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. He is also the author of the book, *Montien Boonma – Temple Of The Mind*. According to Poshyananda; 'Boonma explored art as a place of refuge to calm the mind. His contemplative and interactive installations are both inviting and challenging to the viewer' (Poshyananda. 2003: 1).



Fig. 26. Boonma, M. *Temple of the Mind: Sala for the Mind*, 1995. Herbal medicines, wood, brass, 320x270cm.

Temple of the Mind: Sala for the Mind (fig.26) is an installation that reflects Boonma's experiential considerations realized through his Vipassana practice. The work is assembled from boxes packed with aromatic, medicinal herbs. His construction is a reference to sacred enclosures such as temples, which he referred to as 'places without sickness'. Through his art Boonma has created an opportunity for the viewer to experience the healing of the mind, body and soul. Boonma's concept is based on the understanding

that anyone who engages with the venerated structure will be ultimately engaging with ‘the intrinsic nature of oneself’ (Poshyananda. 2003: 107). Poshyananda said Boonma produced ritual spaces to ‘evoke the process of meditation and healing, where people can rest their mind and thoughts’ (Poshyananda. 2003: 1).

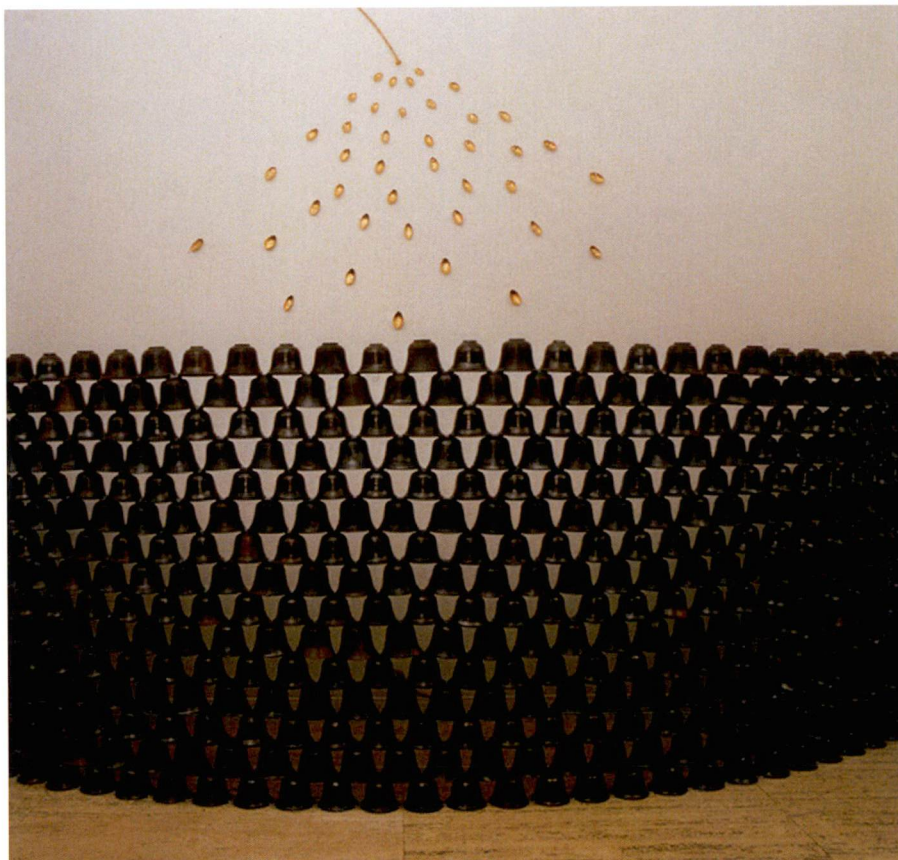


Fig. 27. Boonma, M. *Lotus Sound*, 1992. Terracotta bells, lotus covered with gold, 300x350x300cm. Collection of Bangkok Museum of Contemporary Art.

Another Boonma installation that evokes a contemplative atmosphere is *Lotus Sound* (fig.27). Boonma considered the bells within this piece to be a ‘visual noise’, which have the capacity to calm the mind and abate feelings of ‘stress, suffering and pain’ (Poshyananda. 2003: 25). The bells are also symbolic of the dualistic perspective ingrained within the conventional view. According to Poshyananda, they are at the same time ‘solid and fragile, opaque and transparent and permanent and perishable, metaphorical of a barrier and a filter – partially blocking the way to the golden lotus with petals bursting forth in space’ (Poshyananda. 2003: 94). Within a Buddhist context the lotus symbolizes the ultimate understanding of the connection between the conditioned and enlightened mind, which are fundamentally one and the same.

Boonma’s work reflects the contemplative environment I envisage for the final installation I will construct. The Vipassana conviction of incorporating a non-sectarian viewpoint (regardless of Buddhist influence) was intrinsic to Boonma’s philosophy. Like Gormley, Boonpa created his work with the hope of sharing his experiences of the sacred with all people. According to Poshyananda, Boonma’s art was not made exclusively for Buddhist audiences ‘as he felt that his concepts could be experienced regardless of doctrine or belief’ (Poshyananda. 2003: 36).

Synthesized Images

During the six-week period prior to leaving for the Vipassana retreat, I created a body of work, which was inspired by the simplicity, naturalness and tranquillity associated with Zen ink drawings (fig.10). The enterprise evolved into a series of works that reflected, re-iterated and expanded upon issues previously examined and presented throughout the inquiry (fig.28).

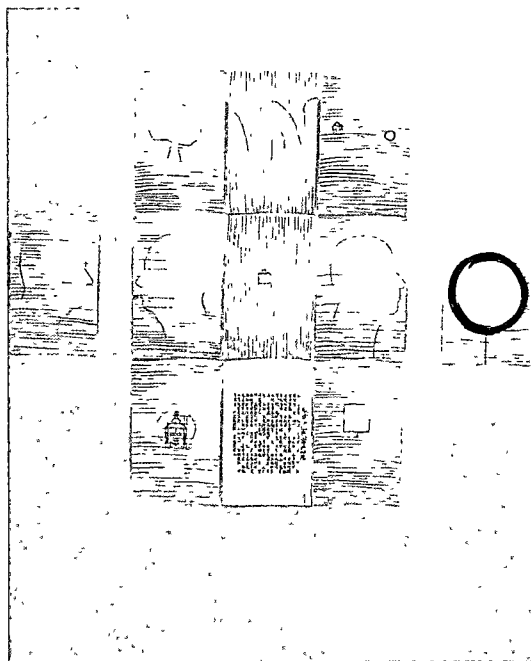


Fig. 28. King, G. *Synthesized Images*, 2004. Ink On paper, 440x330cm.

I understand the final composition of the eleven sketches as a two-dimensional Mandala. The figure at the far left of the arrangement is an isolated entity existing within its own conditioned, egocentric mind. The nine drawings that make up the main body of the work reflect my search for meaning and the influences and inspirations that have been encountered and pursued in association with this endeavour. The black Zen circle (Enso) points to my ultimate goal, which is total understanding and liberation. The parallel and

vertical lines dominant throughout all the drawings reflect my considerations on the pervading unity of all phenomena.

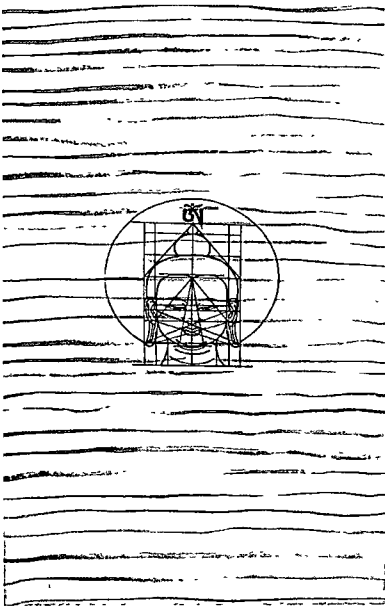


Fig. 29. King, G. *Synthesized Images*, detail, 2004. Ink on paper, 65x104cm. (Artwork by Namgyal Yeshe).

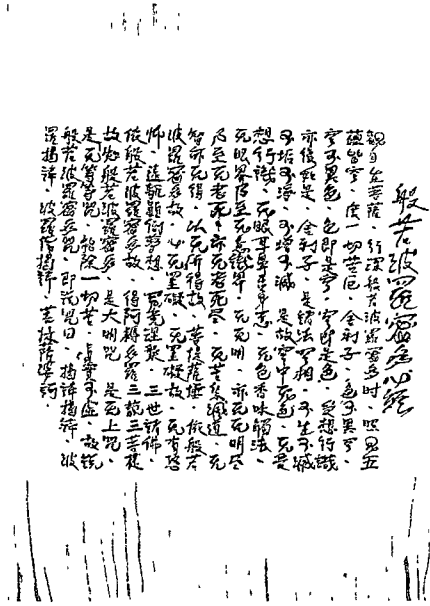


Fig. 30. King, G. *Synthesized Images*, detail, 2004. Ink on paper, 65x104cm. (Artwork by Molly Tay).

A related element of the *Synthesized Images* series was the assistance provided and the contributions made by two people with varying connections to Buddhism and art. Karma Namgyal Yeshe (A Tibetan Dharma name, received from the Lamas) studied printmaking before becoming a novice Tibetan Buddhist monk. Namgyal Yeshe has been another source of inspiration and knowledge contributing to my understanding of Tibetan Buddhism. Before joining the order, Shane (Western name) was a Devonport cement worker. In a newspaper article written about the Buddhist temple in Launceston, Namgyal Yeshe was quoted as saying; ‘My former self was cynical and sceptical, hard on the outside but soft on the inside . . . I decided to look inwardly and this path facilitates that’ (Voss, 2004). Namgyal Yeshe's contribution to the ink series (fig.29) is a representation of the precision required when creating sacred Tibetan art. Lama Tharthang Tulku Rinpoche who wrote *Sacred Art of Tibet* considered this form of art to be a bridge between ‘different levels of awareness and forms of existence, between the ultimate and the conventional. A very unique bridge, it links but does not separate’ (Rinpoche. 1974: 13).

Another person who contributed directly to the series was Molly Tay a Malaysian born Chinese artist who completed an MFAD at the University of Tasmania. Tay, a practising Buddhist, lived with me for a year while she studied at the Academy of the Arts. Molly and

I shared many cross-cultural exchanges of views relating to Buddhism and art. Molly's contribution (fig.30) is a Chinese calligraphic representation of the Buddha's *Heart Sutra*. The basic message conveyed in this Sutra is expressed by the words; 'Form is emptiness, emptiness is form' (Dalai Lama. 2002: 19-22). (I have presented and considered the Buddhist concept of emptiness throughout the exegesis).

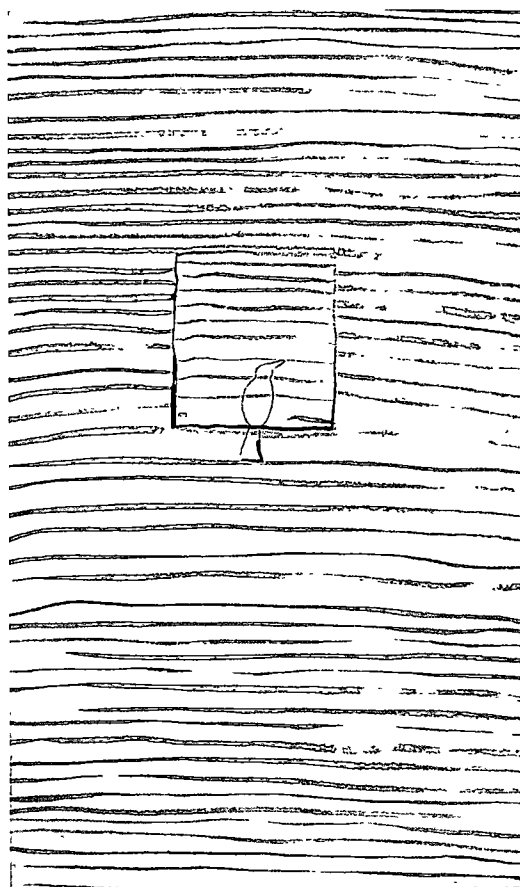


Fig. 31. King, G. *Synthesized Images*, detail, 2004. Ink on paper, 65x104cm.

During the development of the *Synthesized Images* series a particular experience led to the creation of the ink drawing depicting a bird (fig.31). While having a break outside my studio at the Academy of The Arts, I observed a starling flying around, trapped inside the art school. It was looking for an escape route and intermittently flew to a closed window situated high in the building. As the bird stood at the skylight it appeared to be longing for the freedom of the vast expanses just beyond the glass. I empathized with the bird's plight and equated its situation to the circumstances inherent to my conditioned mind. From a relative viewpoint I consider my absolute freedom to be dependent upon alternative circumstances, which are glimpsed through the perspectives created by the Buddhist, artistic and nature inspired practices I engage with.

These experiences subsequently influenced my decision to create an additional element for the final installation, *Mandala of the Mind*. The meditating figure (fig.32) made of clay, which is symbolic of myself and my relationship and affinity with nature, will sit apart from the central element of the installation, representing its perceived separation and attempted unification with the universal mind represented by the wire house. The body is naked, displaying the scars representative of the physical and mental suffering, which can accumulate from ones journey through conventional existence. Shakespeare described these circumstances through Hamlet as the ‘heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to’ (*Hamlet*, Shakespeare. 1978: 861). The Zen circle, which will surround the figurative work, will correspond with the other organic circles that will cover the entire gallery floor, signifying the figures fundamental unified relationship with all phenomena.

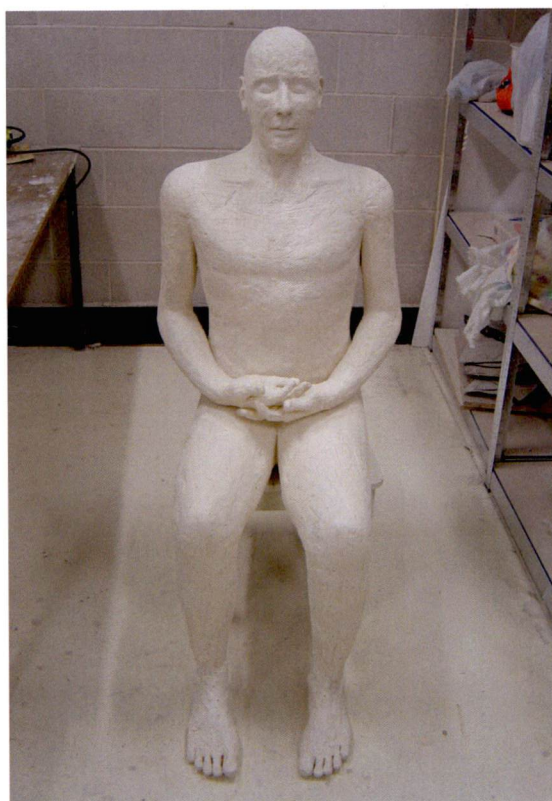


Fig. 32. King, G. *Mandala of the Mind*, detail, 2005.
Wood, ceramic, 140x50x70. (Work in progress).

Synthesized Images was an important contribution to my investigation as it formed a pivotal point between the earlier visual research and the work to be completed. The interaction with other artists also highlights the personal relationships that have helped direct, guide and influence this examination. Furthermore, the drawings were valuable because they assisted in stimulating additional thought and considerations toward the

various technical and aesthetic issues pertaining to the three-dimensional mandala that concludes the research.

Future directions

As I moved towards the final work to be presented it was important for me to further understand and clarify the practical elements involved in the making, feel, logistics and aesthetics relevant to the concluding installation. To assist in this endeavour I produced a series of works also titled, *Mandala of the Mind* (figs.33,34,35).

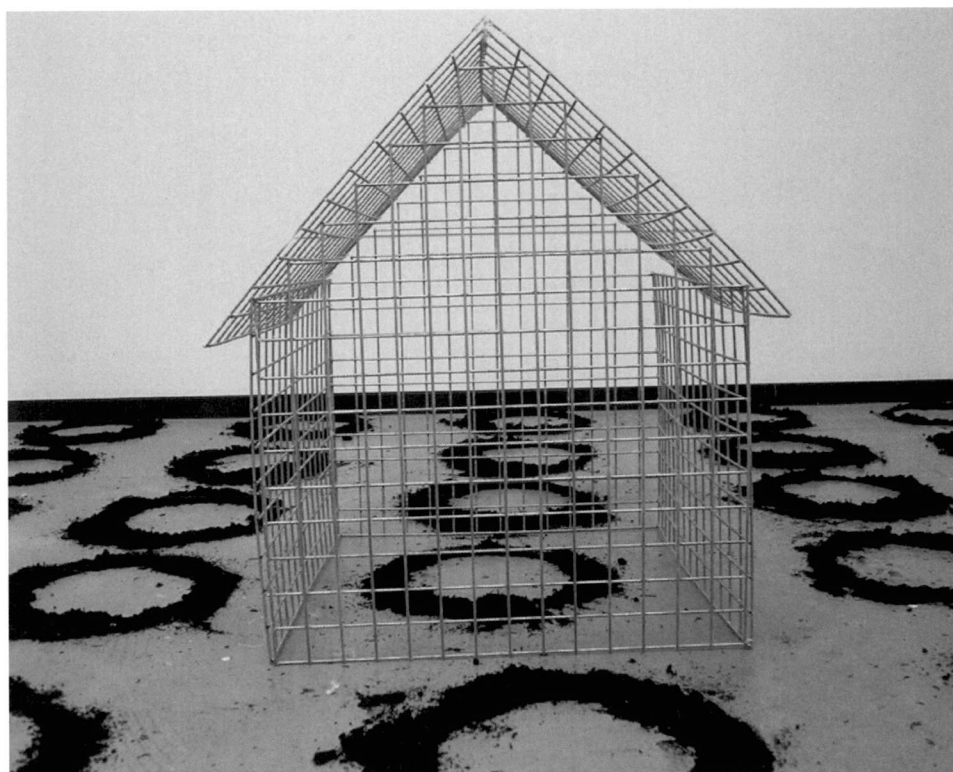


Fig. 33. King, G. *Mandala of the Mind*, detail, 2005. Steel, compost, wire house size, 90x70x70cm. Gallery floor dimensions, 5x6m. Academy of The Arts, drawing gallery.

The indoor installation (fig.33) was created within a gallery environment and although the wire house, Zen circles and floor space covered, were approximately one-third the scale of the final work, I was never the less capable of acquiring an understanding as to how the concluding artwork was to be installed. This process also assisted me to become aware of the appropriate organic material to be used indoors to create the Zen circles and the correct ratio they would have to each other and the house. The preliminary set-up in the small gallery space also helped me to comprehend the pertinent lighting required to support the contemplative nature of the final presentation.

The outdoor installations (figs.34,35) were also significant in that they assisted me to understand how I may approach and develop future projects. Making art in the natural environment is another method I will pursue to assist my comprehension and appreciation of the intrinsic link I share with all life. I concur with Goldsworthy's views on working in and with nature; 'Although it is often a practical and physical art, it is also an intensely spiritual affair that I have with nature: a relationship' (Goldsworthy. 1996: 164).



Fig. 34. King, G. *Mandala of the Mind*, detail, 2005. Steel, compost, wire house size, 90x70x70cm. Liffey Falls, Tasmania.

The location where I constructed the Mandala at Beauty Point (fig.35) was at the end of the street where I used to live as a child. As I worked on the sand in the warm sun a sense of calmness pervaded the whole exercise. I had played on this same beach thirty-seven years earlier as a ten-year-old boy. Since that time I have travelled far from the mind of my childhood. My affiliation with the surrounding natural environment is analogous of the essential, interrelated relationship I was now seeking to understand in association to myself and all else. During the creation of this artwork my distinctions between mind and body, past and present, and self and other, gradually dissolved to create within my being

an atmosphere of harmonious unification. Indeed, on this occasion, in more ways than one, I had brought the mind home.



Fig. 35. King, G. *Mandala of the Mind*, detail, 2005. Steel, compost, wire house size, 90x70x70cm. Beauty Point, Tasmania.

CONCLUSION

In the Vedas (sacred Hindu texts) it is written, truth is one the sages speak of it by many names. Throughout this inquiry I have introduced various individuals who have unilaterally explored the true nature of existence. Their means of investigations have ranged between the subjective realizations of the Buddhist masters and the objective scientific scrutiny employed by the quantum physicists. However diverse their methods have been and whatever their level of understanding, the one conclusion they all share is the recognition of an underlying unifying reality. The research has revealed; because of the intrinsic connection we share with the whole, the fundamental nature of the human mind has always been pure and unobstructed. The greatest obstacle to understanding and appreciating our essential actuality is the ignorance created by the conditioned, egocentric component of the mind. Personal experiences and practices have assisted me to observe and understand some of the vagaries inherent to my own conditioned mind. These observations have led me to conclude that the search for self-understanding and total reconciliation with the world I live in is for myself a personal quest that requires considerable effort and vigilance.

The artists, scientists, philosophers and mystics presented throughout this exegesis have been instrumental to my argument for an elemental truth. However, the necessary contribution relevant to my inquiry has been the first-hand experiential insights obtained through the application of the research methodologies. Buddhism, art and nature have provided me with the means, inspiration and language with which to explore existence and convey my findings. Inherent in my processes have been the interactions shared with the many people I have encountered during the course of this research. Their valuable input on numerous levels have made this project possible. Indeed, every contact has contributed to a growing awareness within myself, consequently increasing the understanding I have of my own relationship with existence.

The art produced for this investigation is a visual representation of the ideas, concepts, philosophies, personal experiences and contemplations described within the exegesis. The common link between most of the artists whose work I have introduced throughout this project is their association with Buddhism and or contemplative practice. A review of their art highlights the unique approaches each of them has taken to convey their common

beliefs. This situation is not surprising, because each artist brings to their creative processes their own background of cultural and individualistic conditioning. Within this context I have produced and presented my own distinctive artwork. It is at the meeting point between our diverse characteristics and shared views and goals that we acknowledge our differences and independently express the interrelationship that exists between the one and the all.

When Kimsooja meditated in the middle of some of the world's major cities one of her intentions was to highlight the need for a unified harmony amongst all people. I agree with Kimsooja's viewpoint and admire her bold approach. In contrast to her intrepid interpersonal displays, my somewhat more conservative and formal concluding creation reflects the foremost intention I have to understand and take responsibility for my own mind in connection to all my relationships. The work is also symbolic of the creative processes I am employing to fashion my being into a more positive and receptive nature.

Like Montien Boonma and Antony Gormley, I express my interrelated experiences primarily through conventional imagery. Unlike them, it is not a concern of mine that others understand my concepts or specific contemplative experiences. I regard my conceptual and aesthetic approach to be inviting, all-inclusive and non-didactic, providing an atmosphere conducive to quiet individual reflection. Duchamp's consideration that the viewers creative input is integral to the artists inspired processes highlights and reiterates my deliberation that the person who engages with the art I have created is ultimately responsible for their own reactions. In my assessment it would be more pertinent for the viewer to relate to, and explore their own personal responses and experiences, consequently arriving at their own conclusions.

Although their intentions are in line with the fundamental Buddhist philosophy on equality, much of the iconography employed by artists like Karma Phunstok and Rudolph Stingel is non-secular, featuring Buddhist imagery that has the potential to both confuse and alienate a non-Buddhist viewer. I understand Buddhism and Buddhist imagery as a means to an end, not an end in itself. The extensive use of organic material within my final installation is representative of the natural world and the appreciation and affinity many humans feel toward it. I see the natural environment as phenomena accessible to everyone, which symbolizes the sacred qualities innate within all beings. Andy Goldsworthy expresses these themes within his art making processes. The difference in our approaches is that he

interprets and conveys his experiences of the natural world through working directly in and with nature. I understand, explain and make manifest my relationship with nature through a context, which is informed by Buddhist practice and personal experience. From this perspective my work is also an expression of the inexpressible, the essence of being, which transcends the limitations attributed to the conventional viewpoint.

In the exegesis I alluded to the universal qualities inherent to a flower. It is my aim to continue to bridge the gap between the philosophical understanding I have of the flower's interdependent nature and my experiential and psychological appreciation of its true significance.

In response to my experiences in Tasmania, I would like to share a final insight with you.

It is my consideration that all humans without exception carry inside them at all times the innate understanding of their fundamental harmonious affiliation with all else. This intrinsic knowledge can be compared to a precious gem that shines on regardless of our various relative interactions. Indeed, it is in the midst of our day-to-day relationship with the ordinary that the prized possession, which exists within us, resonates with its most profound practical potential.



Fig. 36. King, G. *Mandala of the Mind*, detail, 2006. Steel, top-soil, wood, ceramic. Gallery floor dimensions, 18mx13m. Assessment Exhibition, Academy Gallery, Launceston.

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